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ABSTRACT

The focus of this booklet is on matching, recognizing, and identifying colors, shapes, and sizes. Concept development as well as vocabulary learning are goals. A variety of materials are used in the activities. Activities for children from preschool through grade 2 are grouped by topic. (MNS)

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A Good Apple Activity Book for Preschool-2nd Grade

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Let's Learn About

Colors, Shapes, and Sizes

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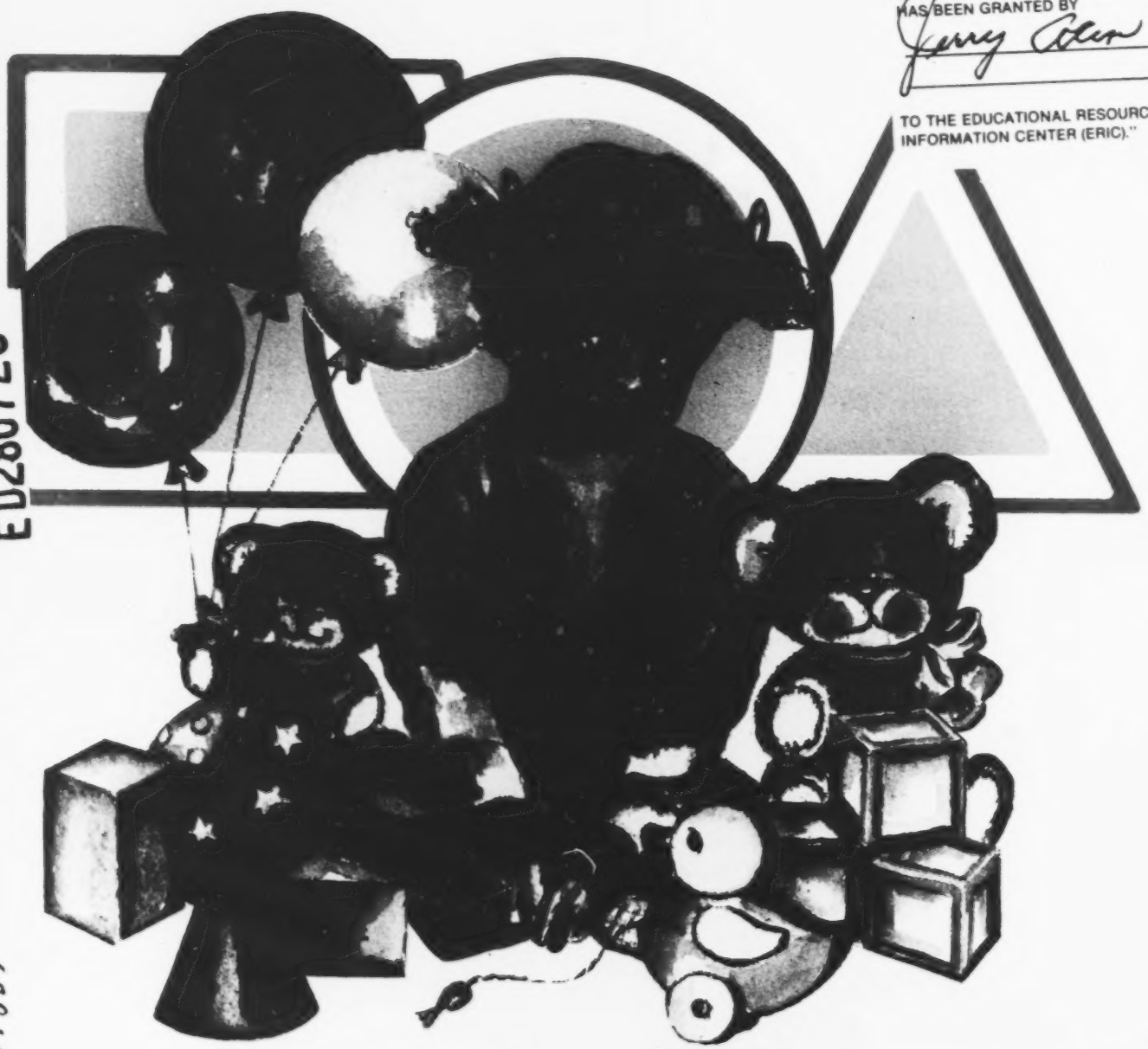

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by Diana Courson

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To
Jill and Michael
and Jeri
who pushed me out of the nest

I am indebted to Jeri Carroll for many of the ideas in the section on color.

Special thanks to Bonnie Mara and the children at the Red Cottage Learning Center who have shared with me their ideas and observations.

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About Teaching Color, Shape, and Size

Matching, recognizing, and identifying colors, shapes, and sizes are traditional preschool activities. In theory a child could make it through life without knowing the names of the colors, shapes, and sizes. This vocabulary is critical, however, to success in school and is certainly a time-saver throughout life. So we continue to teach colors, shapes, and sizes.

The significance of these skills lies in helping the child learn to focus on one element of an object as he begins the task of comparing, combining, and creating symbols. We know that a child who cannot match simple shapes will have a great deal of difficulty learning the letters of the alphabet and continuing on with the reading process. The child who is not able to identify and compare the sizes of two or three objects will struggle through many math lessons.

As the children learn to watch for colors, shapes, and sizes in their environment, they become more sophisticated observers. Careful observation is essential for developing critical thinking skills and learning to solve problems. In addition, observation of the environment is a most useful tool for art education.

If you have been teaching preschoolers for very many years, you may be weary of the same old color and shape games. The activities in this book use many familiar materials, but approach them in new ways. If you are a new teacher, you will find that these activities are based on what we know about how children learn. That is, you will be using concrete materials, the experiences have a specific focus, and the activities can be completed in a short time. The activities are fun for children, so you will want to repeat your group's favorites throughout the year.

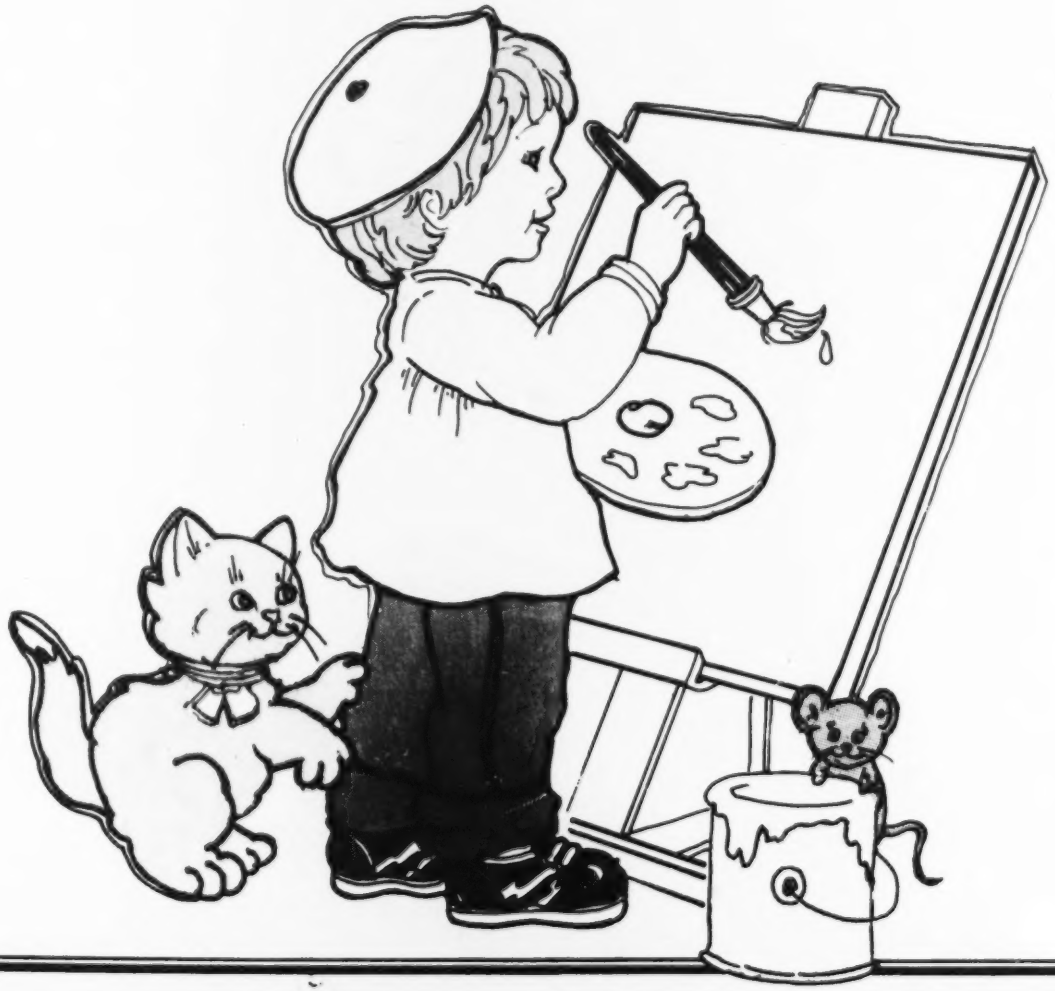
Just as we hope to stimulate the creative thinking of children, so it is hoped that the ideas in this book will stir your creativity and you will develop many other activities. Because teachers are busy people, most of the activities are designed to use few materials and require little preparation. Do not be put off by the few games that do call for more elaborate materials.

The best way to use this book is to skim the entire book, marking those activities which immediately appeal to you. As you plan the learning experiences for your children, go back to each section and read carefully the other suggestions. You will probably find ideas

that you have already used. Great! It is hoped that you will also find many new ideas to try. Combine these old and new teaching ideas for a very successful lesson plan. When you are planning for the children, don't you try to include games, songs, and stories that they already know along with the new material? Your day will be smoother—you will feel better—if you plan some activities that you have done before and some that are new to you. The familiar activities provide a "home base" for you, and the new projects keep life interesting.

In each section of the book, you will find suggestions for incorporating concepts of color, shape, and size into the classroom environment. These activities require little teacher direction or intervention and are usually intended for independent work by the child. You do need to observe and occasionally comment on the child's work in order to give the child the vocabulary of color, shape, and size names toward which you are working. You will find other activities that are more teacher-directed. These experiences are most suitable for small group work, although some of them lend themselves to whole group activities.

COLOR



Color Awareness

The first step in helping children learn about color is to be sure that they are aware that there are different colors in the world, not just in their crayon boxes. There are several things you can do to help children develop this awareness.

1. Use color words when you talk with the children throughout the day.

   EXAMPLES: Jill, I see that you are wearing a *red* dress.
   Michael, you sure can bounce that *green* ball.
   Molly, do you like that *purple* Popsicle?

2. When you call children to do things in the classroom, use color words.

   EXAMPLES: Callie, would you put the *red* crayons away, please?
   Barry, would you pick up that *brown* pencil, please?

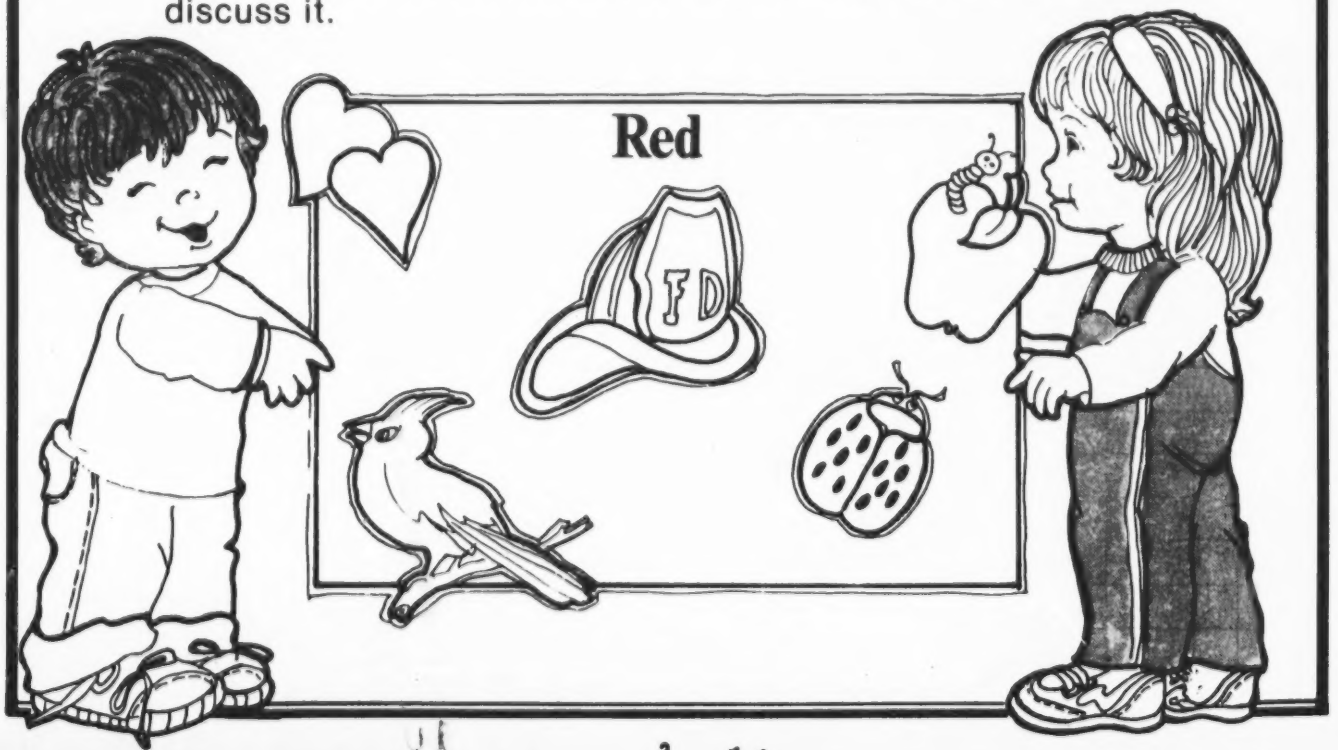
3. Set up your room so that it is color coded.
   Have a green rug for circle time.
   Let the shelves for the blocks be yellow.
   Color code the stacks where the paper belongs.

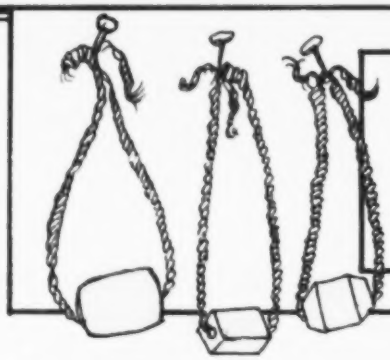
4. When you go on walks, comment on the things of various colors.
   EXAMPLES: Wow, the sky is really *blue* today!
   That stop sign is *red,* isn't it?

5. Comment on the children's clothing and use those colors to call them to do things.
   EXAMPLES: Frances, that is a beautiful *brown* dress you have on.
   Kay, you look great in those new *black* shoes.
   If you are wearing *orange,* stand up and go wash your hands for lunch.

6. Put up a big—at least 18" x 24"—sheet of colored paper in the room. You may begin with one color, adding a new color periodically, or you may decide to put up all colors at the same time. This decision will, of course, depend upon the developmental level of your group and your approach to teaching colors.

   Each day glue something onto one of the sheets that is that color. It can be a picture of something or the object itself. Since children are well aware of changes that occur in the room, they will comment on the picture or object that is glued and you can discuss it.





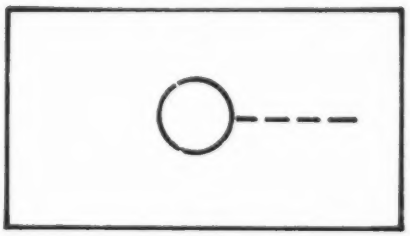
Math Center

7. Color code your learning centers by placing a tag of that color in the center. When you assign centers, call them by color or have the children wear colored bead necklaces while in that center.

   EXAMPLE: The Math Center will be blue. Make the center label for that center blue. The children wear necklaces with one blue bead on them while in the Math Center. When you are ready for the children to go to centers, say, "Those who are going to work in the blue Math Center may leave the circle now."

8. In the dramatic play area of your classroom, provide a tablecloth or place mats to match the color that you are studying. Coordinate the colors of the doll clothes with the colors the class is learning about.

   The doll's wardrobe can be easily expanded by making simple ponchos from solid colored broadcloth. Cut a rectangle from the fabric, cut out a neck hole and make a small slit in the back of the poncho. These simple clothes are also much easier than doll clothes for small hands to take on and off the dolls.



9. Use various colors of tape to mark spots on the floor. You can use these colors for efficient transitions from one activity to another.

   EXAMPLES: Please sit on the *yellow* marks for the story today.
   Stand on the *blue* marks for the game we are going to play.
   Please sit on the *purple* marks for circle time.

10. Hang a washcloth of the color you wish to study for the week in a special place so that the children and families can see it.

11. At the beginning of the year, put out only one color of paint at the easel each day. By doing this you will focus the child's attention on that particular color. Talk with the child as he paints: "Do you remember how the paint looked yesterday? Is this paint the same color as the paint we had out yesterday? I wonder what color we would like to use tomorrow?"

12. If you provide a snack for the children, plan to use foods that are of contrasting colors and talk about those colors at snack time.

Readiness Activities

Before you formally teach children the names of colors, you must make sure that they can tell the differences in colors. They need to be able to sort colors, to group them together in groups according to color. They can do this sometime between the ages of one and two if you watch carefully, not necesarily if you try to get them to do it for you.

Try these activities and observe what the children do. If they do not sort them by color by themselves, sit down and do it once for them. Then leave and observe to see what happens.

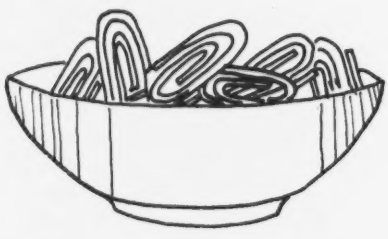
1. Place red, yellow, and blue cubes in a bowl and put them out for the children to play with you.

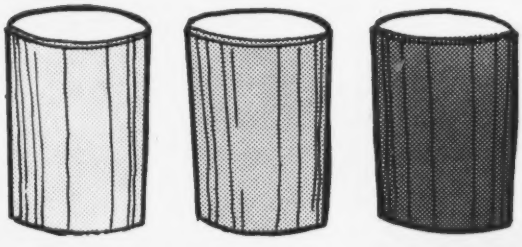
2. Place red, yellow, and blue teddy bear counters in a bowl and put three clear plastic tumblers in the bowl with the counters.

3. Put the red, yellow, and blue beads with holes in them in a bowl and put a string in the bowl for the children to string beads.

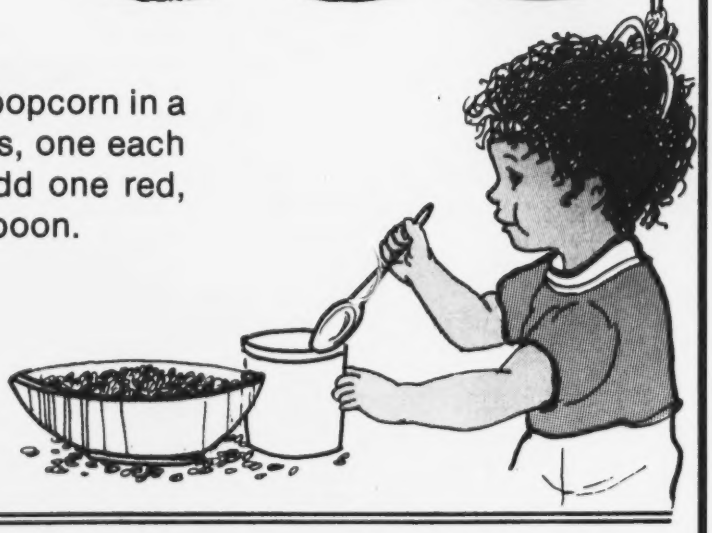
4. Place large red, yellow, and blue plastic paper clips in a bowl. Put near the bowl of paper clips three plastic tumblers, one each of red, yellow, and blue.

5. Place red, yellow, and blue kitty counters in a bowl along with three plastic cups, one each of red, yellow, and blue. Put a pair of kitchen tongs in the bowl.





6. Place red, yellow, and blue popcorn in a bowl with three plastic cups, one each of red, yellow, and blue. Add one red, one yellow, and one blue spoon.

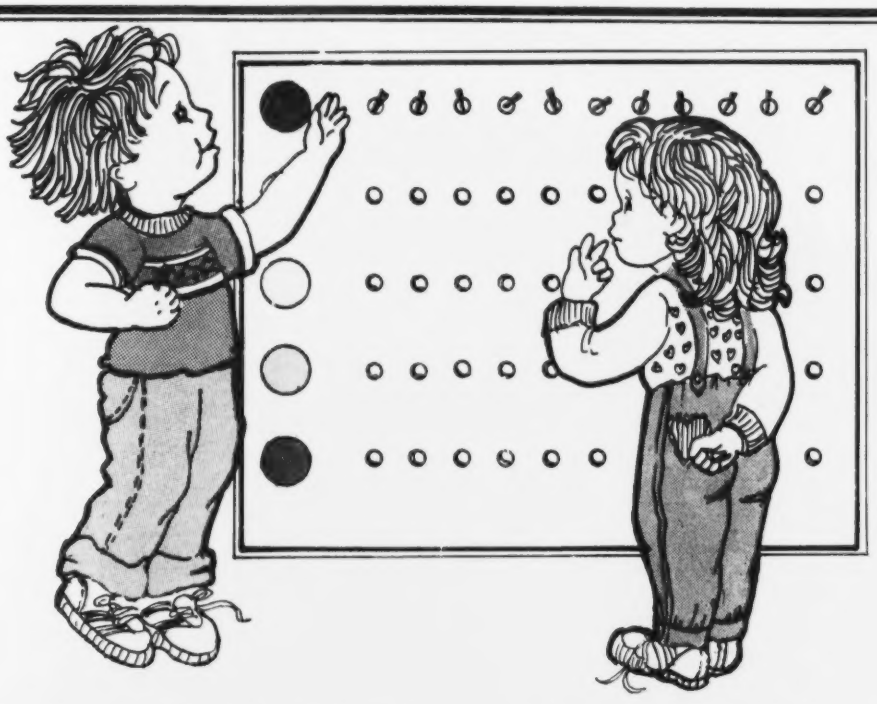


Variations on Readiness Activities

*Try these activities with other colors.

*Try using only two colors at first, increasing to as many as eight colors.

*Ask some of the children to make up color sorting games using materials they find on the playground or in the classroom.



7. Tape off one row of holes on a pegboard with masking tape. With permanent markers make circles of red, yellow, or blue over each taped hole. The child fills in a row of pegs beside each circle, matching the color of the pegs and the color of the circle.

Motivating Comments to Be Made by the Teacher

Can you tell me what color these are (as you point to objects)?

These beads are blue just like your dress (if the child has on a blue dress).

Can you find another object that is the same color?

Can you find another object that is a different color from this one?

You have put all of the red beads on one string, haven't you?

You picked up the blue teddy bear with the blue spoon and put it in the blue cup, didn't you?

Color Activities

LOLLIPOP, LOLLIPOP ON A STICK

Precut or have the children cut out circles of the following colors: red, yellow, orange, green, blue, purple, brown, and black. Have a "stick" for each of the colors for each child. You can use Popsicle sticks, tongue depressors, or twigs from the yard.

INSTRUCTIONS: Glue a circle onto the top of each stick to form a lollipop. If you have a juice can for each child, he can store the lollipops in the can.
To play the game, recite this chant:

Lollipop, lollipop
On a stick;
Tell me which lollipop
You will pick.

The child picks the correct lollipop from the set to show you that he knows the color that has been stated.

EXTENSIONS: Play the game in a group.

Let the children play the game in pairs.

Put a set of lollipops in a center where the children can go to use them when they want.

COLORFUL SNACK

Make vanilla pudding for the children ahead of time for this activity. It is best to use the cooked kind. Pour the pudding into clear plastic cups for the snack.

INSTRUCTIONS: For our snack today we are going to have vanilla pudding. You can change the color of the pudding today, but not the taste. We will have four colors for you, and as we come around you can tell us what color you want. We will squeeze a drop or two into your pudding, and you will have to mix it up to see what happens. If you want another color, we will add a second color, and you can stir to see what will happen then. In the end, we will all eat our vanilla pudding and have a colorful snack.

EXTENSIONS: Layer the various colors in a larger container if the children don't sample it in the meantime.

Do the project as a group and in a large bowl.

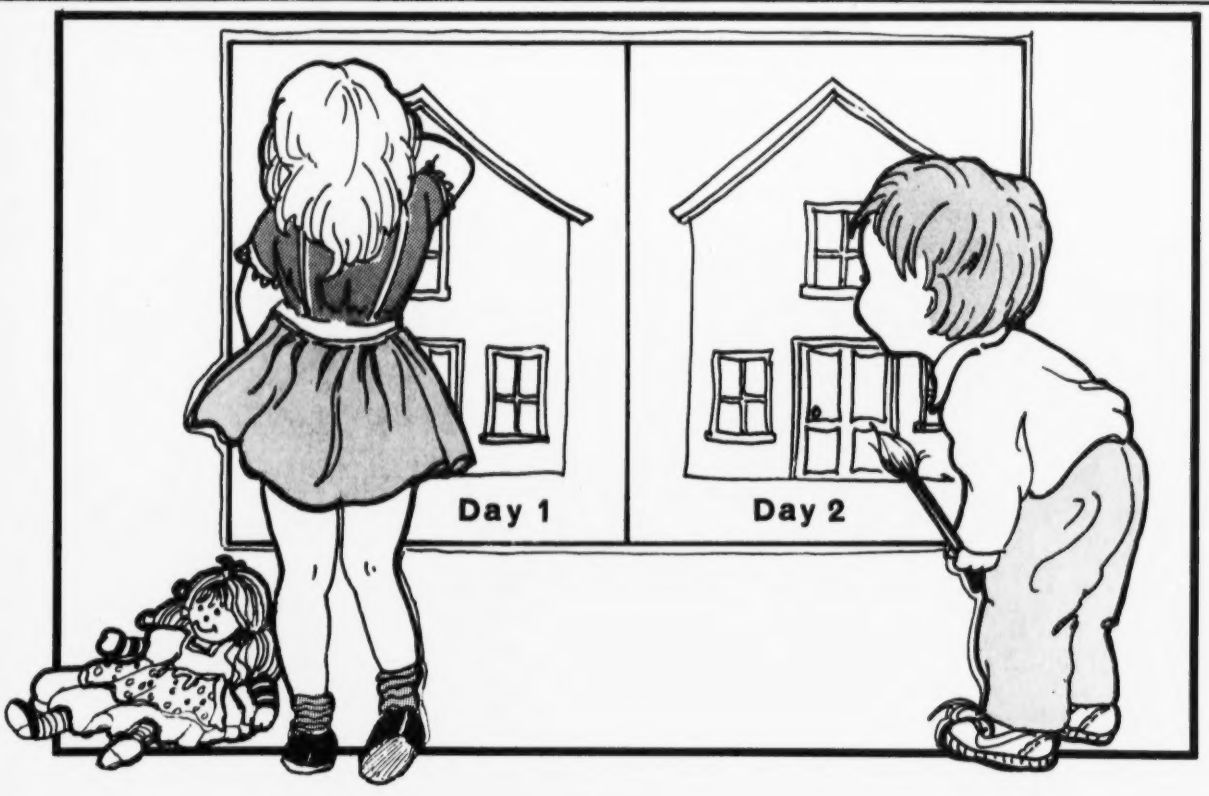
Let each child share his concoctions by putting a spoonful of his into his friend's cup, and then the friend can put a spoonful into his.

COLORFUL WATER, COLORFUL FLOWERS

Pick some white snowballs or forsythia or buy some white carnations. Bring in three or four clear vases to put the flowers in. If you are a nongardener, this is a great opportunity to invite parents to help by sending in the flowers from their gardens.

INSTRUCTIONS: Put water in each of the vases and then add food coloring to each until the water is fairly dark—it takes quite a lot of food coloring.
Place the flowers in the vases and see what happens. Check the flowers every thirty minutes throughout the next few days. Is it really magic?

EXTENSION: Help the children record their observations at regular intervals, such as first thing in the morning, at lunchtime, and just before going home.



OUTLINE AND PAINT

On day one, use only black paint and outline various shapes with a large primary paintbrush. The children can draw squares, circles, triangles, or rectangles, or they can draw the outlines of houses, cars, trees, people.

On day two, provide the children with a variety of colors of paint. Use smaller brushes of various sizes. Let the children fill in their outline paintings with color.

TEACHING TIPS: Before beginning the first part of this activity, talk with the children about what an outline is. Demonstrate by making some outlines with crayon—a hand, a book, a block, or other objects in the room. Let the children make outlines of shapes in the air with their fingers. Point out that an outline is not colored in—it only shows the shape of the picture. As the children paint with the black paint, remind them that they are only outlining. Tomorrow they will do the coloring.

DROP, DROP, AND SPREAD

Place six containers of different colors of paint on the table for each four children. Place a different brush, spoon, or eyedropper in each container. Provide each child with a piece of paper which is folded in half (if he cannot fold it alone).

INSTRUCTIONS: Open your paper so that it is open wide and the crease or line is down the middle. Take the dripper from the paint container and let a drop or two fall on your paper. Take the dripper from another paint container and let a drop or two of that color fall on your paper. It is all right if it falls on the other paint. Close your paper and rub it carefully on the outside to spread the paint around on the inside. Open up your paper and have a look. What happened?

EXTENSIONS: Have the children dictate to you what they did to make the pictures and write it on the papers to take home.

Let the pictures dry for one day. On the second day give each child a pattern and let him trace the pattern on the back and cut it out. It will make a beautiful butterfly, Easter egg, flower, umbrella, ball, dress, or valentine. Save the scraps, too. They can be used with smaller patterns or for collages just as you would use wallpaper.

Cut interesting mats for the drop paintings. Use red, yellow, and green paint for the activity. Then cut a mat that is in the shape of an apple to frame the painting. By varying the colors of paint used, this activity can be a good holiday or seasonal project. Cut Christmas trees, hearts, shamrocks, or Easter eggs for mats.

DIP, DIP, AND MIX

Place six baby food jars of paint on the table for a set of four children to use. Place a paintbrush in each jar. Each jar should contain a different color of paint. Give each child a baby food jar lid. (Don't forget the aprons.)

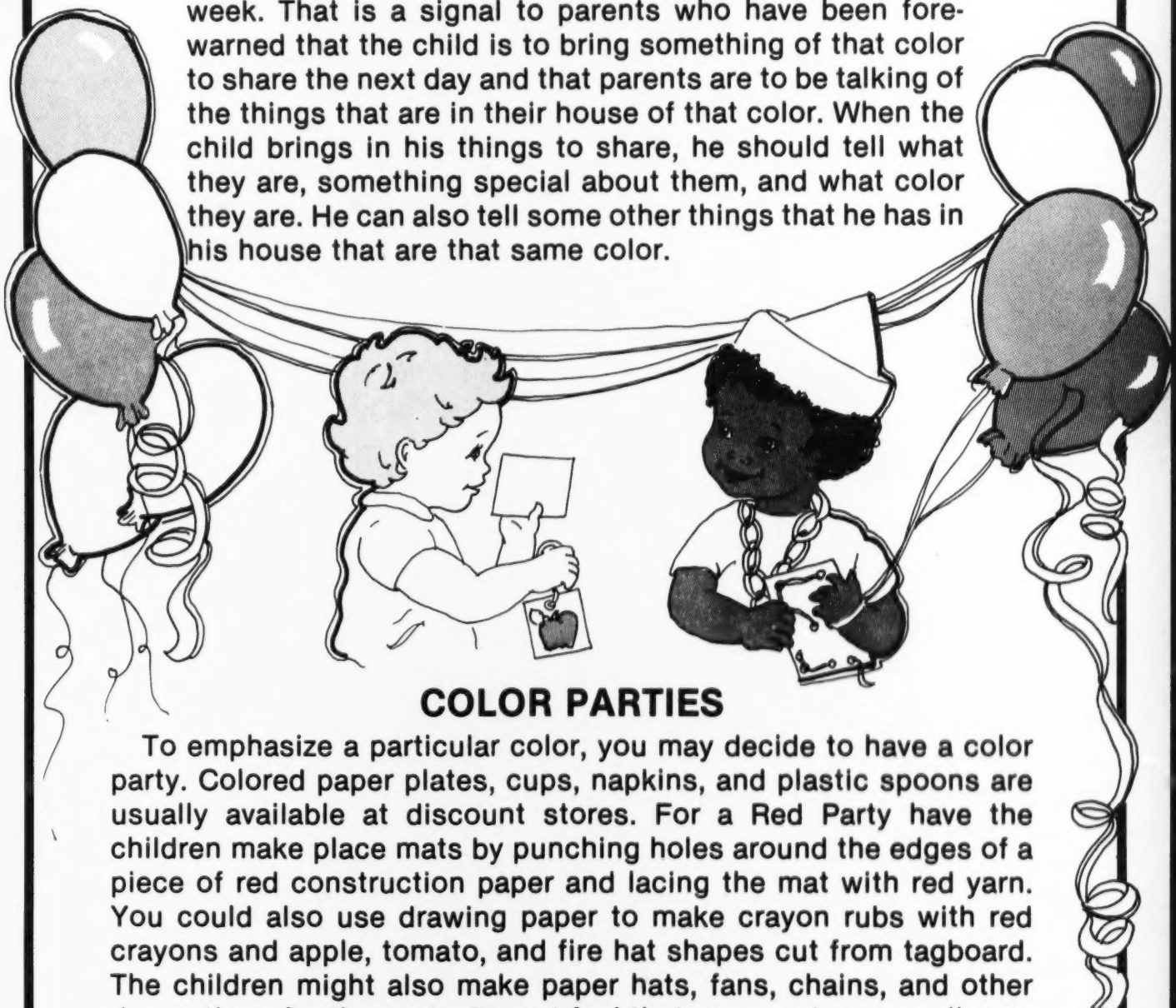
INSTRUCTIONS: (Demonstrate this for the children.) Take the brush from one jar of paint and hold your lid in your other hand. Let the paint from the brush drip into the lid. Put the brush back into the baby food jar of the right color. Take a brush from another jar of paint and hold the lid in the other hand and let the paint from the brush drip into the lid. Put the lid back in front of you on the table. Look to see what has happened.

Pick up the lid and tilt it back and forth to watch what happens as the paints begin to mix.

Provide each child with a clean paintbrush and let him mix the paint in the lid. Be sure to watch what is happening. The child can then paint on a piece of paper with the new color. Ask each child how he made the new color and write that on the paper for the child to take home.

SHARING COLORS

Send each child home with a square of the color of the week. That is a signal to parents who have been forewarned that the child is to bring something of that color to share the next day and that parents are to be talking of the things that are in their house of that color. When the child brings in his things to share, he should tell what they are, something special about them, and what color they are. He can also tell some other things that he has in his house that are that same color.



COLOR PARTIES

To emphasize a particular color, you may decide to have a color party. Colored paper plates, cups, napkins, and plastic spoons are usually available at discount stores. For a Red Party have the children make place mats by punching holes around the edges of a piece of red construction paper and lacing the mat with red yarn. You could also use drawing paper to make crayon rubs with red crayons and apple, tomato, and fire hat shapes cut from tagboard. The children might also make paper hats, fans, chains, and other decorations for the party. Do not feel that you must use up all your red construction paper for this project. Improvise with red swatches from magazine pictures, wallpaper books, and large newsprint that has been painted by the children.

Let the class help you think of all the red foods they can. Then guide the group as they select one or two foods which would be appropriate for the Red Party.

COLORFUL CRAYONS

Using as many colors as you choose, cut strips that are 4½" by 12". Have available for the children strips of yellow construction paper that are 5" by 18".

INSTRUCTIONS: Today we are going to make a pretend crayon box. You will need a pair of scissors and some glue. I have put several colors of paper on this table. You need to cut off one strip from the end of the paper that is about as wide as your finger. (Have each child look at his finger to see about how wide the strip of paper should be. If necessary, talk about how the children might measure the strips of paper.)

Cut as many different colors as you want. After you get all the colors that you want, go to the table where the yellow paper is for the crayon box. To make your crayon box, lay your paper crayons together in a line to measure how big your crayon box will need to be. Cut off a strip of yellow paper just the right size to be your crayon box.

Take the yellow paper and the strips back to your seat and glue the crayons onto the box.

EXTENSIONS: Send home the crayon boxes with the children. Include instructions on how the parents can help their children learn to name their colors. (Look back to the pages on Color Awareness for some ideas that you might give to the parents.)

Use these paper crayons to point to and ask the children their colors.

Let the children cut off the tips of their strips so that they have a point on one end. Then let them decorate the strip like a crayon using their black crayon.

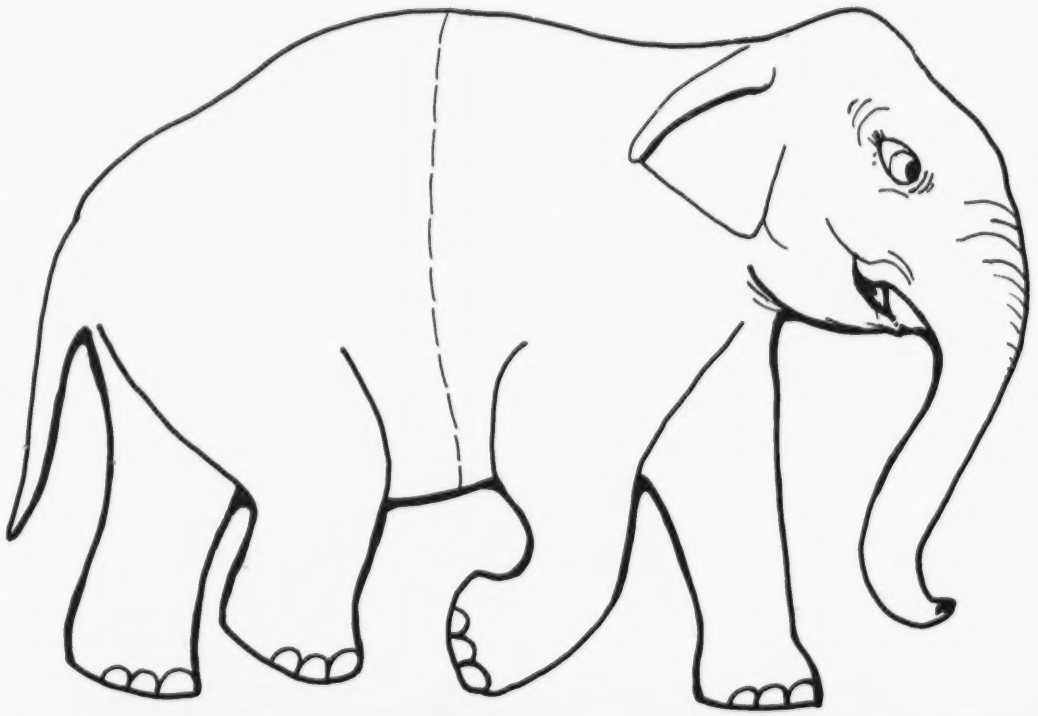
Write the color onto the paper crayon for the children if they are beginning to learn to read the color words.

THE BLUE AND PURPLE ELEPHANT

The two colors blue and purple are often difficult for children to distinguish. Even children who have easily mastered all other colors may continue to confuse blue and purple. For this activity draw a large animal on poster board. You may wish to use the elephant pattern below, enlarging it to about eighteen inches. Color half of the elephant blue and the other half purple. Then look around your room and assemble a group of blue things and purple things. The children practice sorting and naming blue and purple by placing the objects on the matching part of the elephant. As the children work, comment on and ask questions about the colors they are using.

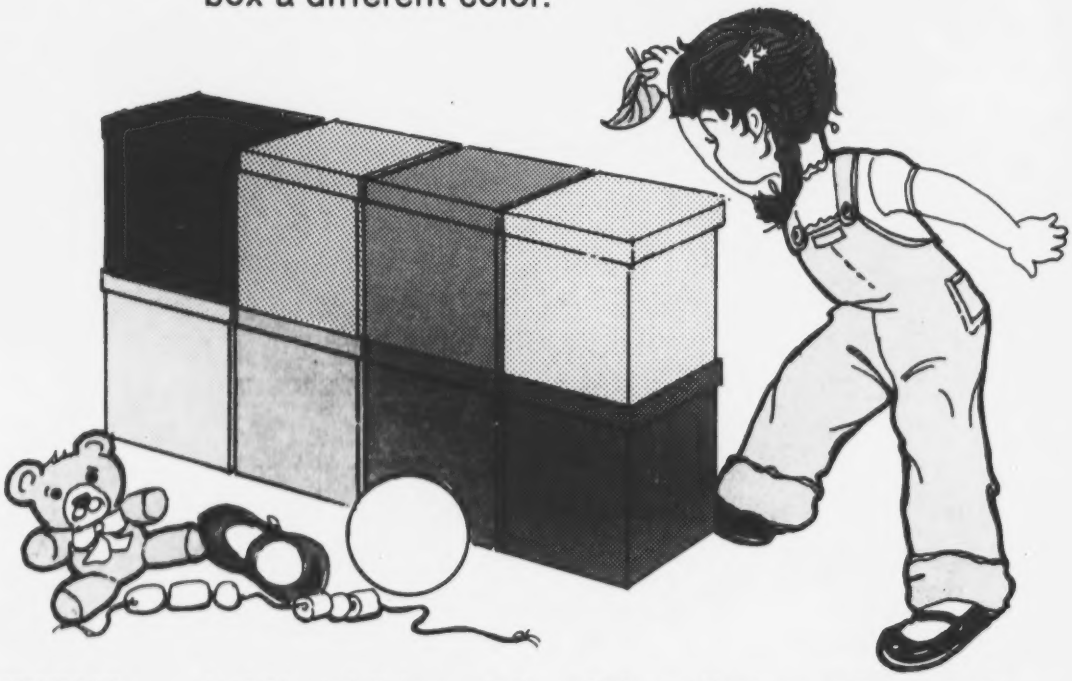
EXTENSIONS: Let several children color the elephant with blue and purple markers or crayons. (This also saves you time!)

Ask the children to collect blue and purple objects from all the learning centers in your classroom. Use this set to sort.



COLOR BOXES

INSTRUCTIONS: Gather eight boxes that are the same size and shape and that have lids. Cover each box with a different color of Con-Tact paper or paint each box a different color.



EXTENSIONS: Let the children gather things that are of one color and place them in the correct box.

Have the children bring things from home each Friday for eight weeks that are the color of the week to place in the box.

Gather several things of each color at garage sales, around the house, around the garage, from all your neighbors' trash, etc., and place them in the box to set out during the week that you talk about that specific color.

Put all of the boxes out for the children to use. They can dump the things from the boxes onto the table and then sort them into the right boxes.

The boxes can sit out all year; and as the children find things that are of certain colors, they can add them to the boxes.

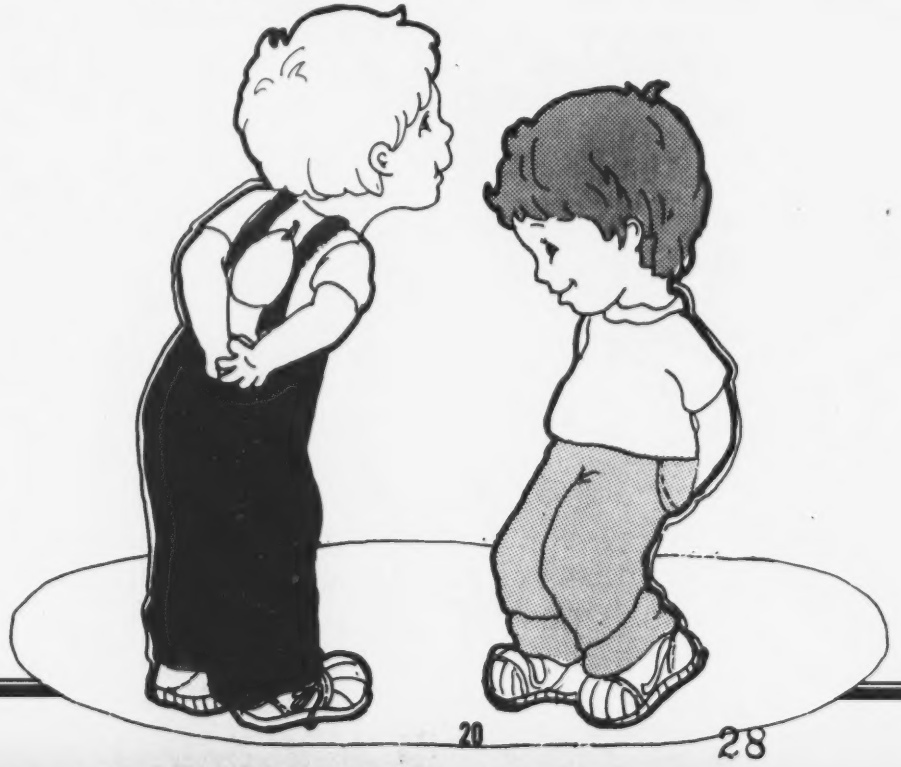
COLOR ON YOUR BACK

Cut a large circle from each color of construction paper that you wish to use. The children sit in a circle on the floor with their legs folded in front of them. Select one child to hide his eyes. Choose another child of about the same height as the first child and pin one of the colored circles on that child's back.

Call, "Ready!" and have the two children face each other in the center of the circle. The only rules of the game are that the children must keep their hands behind their backs and they must stay inside the circle. The player who hid his eyes tries to see the color on the other child's back. The child who has the color on his back, of course, tries to keep the color from being seen.

The first time you play this game, you may need to encourage the children to walk around and use the space in the circle. When the color is correctly identified, both children sit down and two more are chosen. If you know that the child has seen the circle, but does not know the name of the color, whisper the name to him and ask him to say the color out loud.

VARIATION: Use balls of yarn to pin on the child's back instead of paper circles.



MORE COLOR

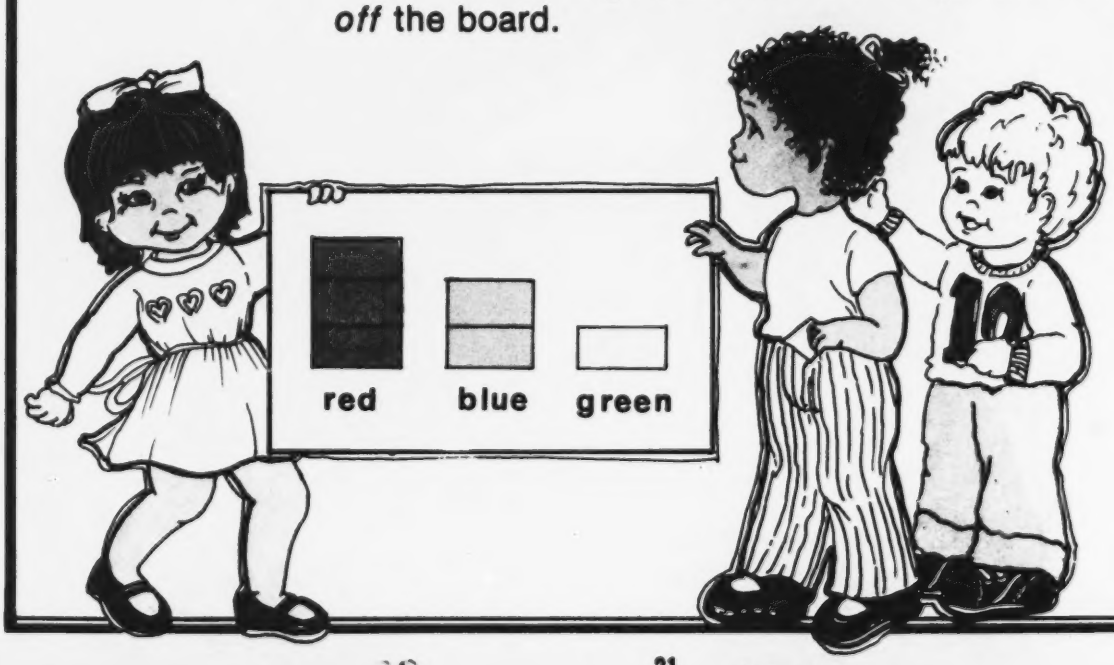
For the children who have mastered the basic colors, there are several ways to increase the level of difficulty in the study of color. First, they may be ready to learn the names of shades of color, such as turquoise and magenta. They may also be ready for more sophisticated color mixing experiences. Finally, you may begin to substitute color words for the color cards in the activities (if the child is beginning to read). The following activities are samples of adapting color experiences for the advanced or older child.

SHADES OF COLOR

Obtain from a paint or hardware store strips of paint color samples. You will need two of each strip, and you will want to use several different colors. This means that you will need two identical red, two identical blue and two identical yellow strips (or whatever colors you choose). Mount one strip of each color on poster board. Cut apart the remaining strips to make color chips. The children use the board and color chips for a matching activity by laying the chips on the matching color strip.

VARIATION: Cut apart all of the strips so that the children sort the paint chips by color families, then match and sequence the shades within the color family.

Have the children use the mounted color strips as patterns for building identical color strips with the chips *off* the board.



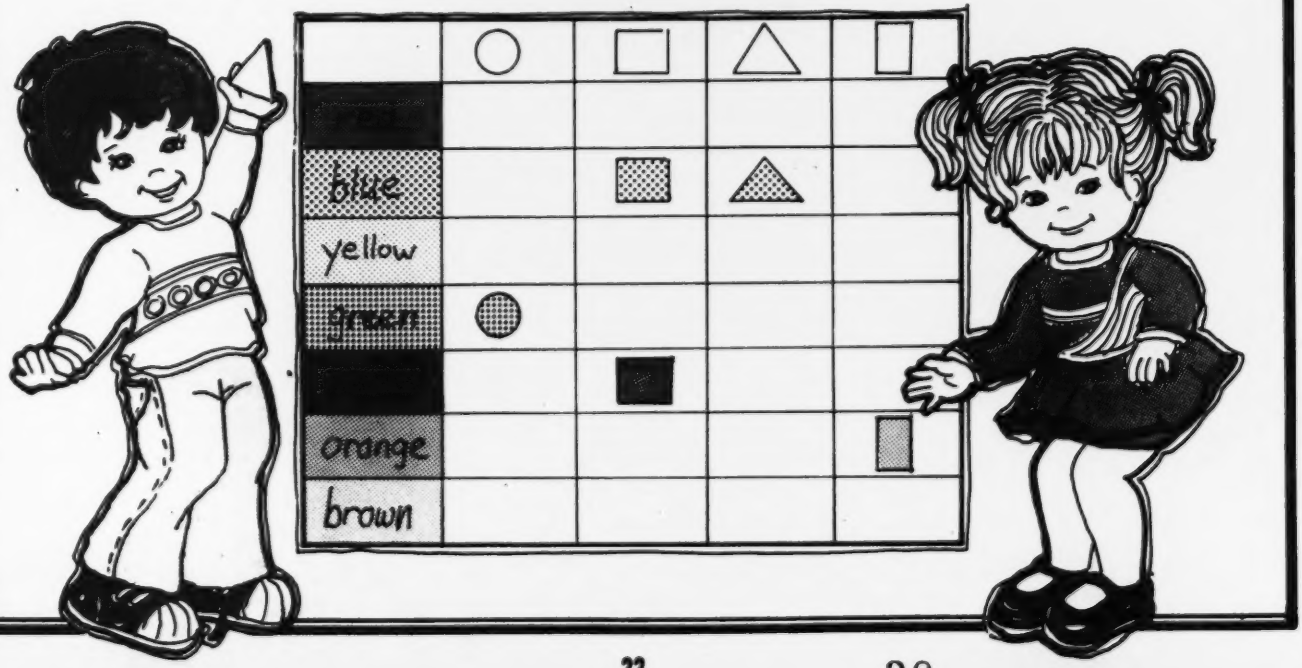
COLOR AND SHAPE MATRIX

Prepare a color and shape matrix similar to the one shown. The board will include columns headed by different shapes and rows which represent different colors. Each space on the matrix should be about two inches square. Cut out shapes of each color. If you are using the eight "crayon box" colors, for example, you will need to cut eight different colored squares, eight circles, eight colored triangles and so on. The child draws a shape from a box or grab bag and correctly locates the shape in the matrix by finding the column and row in which it belongs.

VARIATION: Label the matrix with color and shape words rather than using the actual colors and shapes. Use the same pieces to fill the board.

COLOR ON THE WALL

Tape a long strip of white butcher paper to the wall at the child's eye level. Divide the paper into three equal sections, label each section with a color name, such as red, orange, and yellow. The children draw pictures in each section with markers and crayons. Older children can label their drawings. By using combinations such as red-purple-blue, the children are reminded of color mixing experiences.



SHAPE

Shape Awareness

Shape matching activities do not require the child to name the shapes; these activities require only the abilities to see and to move objects. It is important, however, for you to be nearby to name the shapes and to ask questions to see if the child knows the names of the shapes as he works.

EXAMPLES: Michael, I see that you have put all of the *circles* in the round cake pan.
You've found the *triangle* on the shelf. Now you know where to stack those blocks, Lindsay.
What do we call this shape, Jill?
How many corners does this *square* have?
Is this a *triangle*?

The following suggestions use simple materials to emphasize shapes in your classroom. Begin with these ideas as you informally assess each child's knowledge of basic shapes during free choice and learning center work times.

1. Allow plenty of time for free exploration of your shape sorting box. Notice children who cannot match the blocks to the correct holes in the box or who have trouble correctly positioning the shape so that it drops through the hole.

2. Provide a bowl of beads to string. Use beads that are all the same color but have different shapes.

3. At group time have children sit in a circle, square, triangle, or other shape which you are teaching. You may need to make a chalk or masking tape outline on the floor as a guide for the children. Remember to use the shape name throughout the day: "It's time to come to the triangle for music," or "When I show your name card, you may leave the oval and go to a learning center."

4. Cut easel paper into large shapes on which the children may paint.

5. Put out some of the attribute blocks for the children to play with.

   Attribute blocks are available from most school supply companies. Each set contains plastic shapes in three colors, two sizes, and two thicknesses. For example, there will be a large red thin circle, a large red thick circle, a small red thin circle, and a small red thick circle. The desk-sized sets (medium-sized sets) are moderately priced and are more than worth the money that you will spend.

   If you do not have attribute blocks and cannot get a set, you can substitute a set of cardboard shapes of different sizes.

6. Trace each shape in your collection of unit blocks on Con-Tact paper. Stick the shape patterns on the block storage shelf. Which children seem to automatically match blocks to shapes at cleanup time?

   This technique also helps children select needed blocks as they work, rather than dumping all the blocks on the floor when they begin to build.

7. With masking tape outline a large shape on the floor of the block center. Children may use this outline in various ways, such as running cars and trucks on the tape for a road or building a structure whose base is that shape.

8. Place shape molds and cookie cutters which resemble basic shapes in the sandbox or in Play-Doh.

Shape Activities

When you have assessed each child's knowledge of shapes and have included many shapes in the classroom, you are ready to use more structured activities. Continue to use simple shape emphasis materials such as those already described, but now add the following activities.

SWISS CHEESE

INSTRUCTIONS: Give the child a six-inch construction paper shape. Using a paper punch, the child punches around the edges of the shape. You may wish to make large dots on the paper to indicate where the child is to punch holes, or you may let the child draw the dots, making a "dot-to-dot" shape. Remember that the purpose of this activity is to focus the child's attention on the *shape.* If the child has trouble punching on the dots, go back to using a shape with no dots. Since being able to punch out a predrawn dot is a fine motor skill, you can work on that later.

EXTENSION: Let the children lace yarn through the holes in their pieces of "Swiss cheese." Sort the laced shapes with the children and hang each set of shapes in the room (all the circles in the windows, all the squares on the door, all the triangles on the coat hooks, and so on).

FEELLY SHAPES

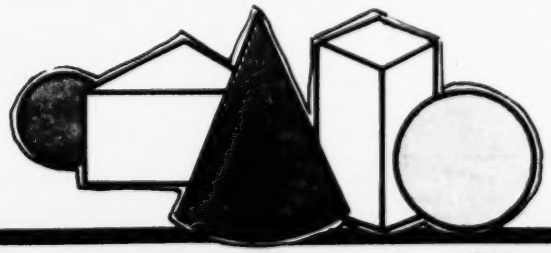
Use sturdy cardboard shapes or a set of carpet shapes or some of the large attribute blocks. Give the children plenty of time to play with these shapes on their own. (To make carpet shapes, cut flat pile synthetic carpet scraps into shapes that are about six inches wide. Singe the edges of each shape to melt the fibers and prevent fraying.)

INSTRUCTIONS: Let each child handle each shape, using his fingers to trace the edge of the shape. Talk with the children about how the shapes are different, how the circle feels different from the square. Then tell the children that you are going to play a game with the shapes. They already know the names of the shapes, but in this game they will not be able to see the shapes. They will be using their fingers to identify the shapes.

Put away all the shapes except one. Place that shape in your feelly box. One child at a time puts his hands into the box and tries to name the hidden shape by feeling it with his hands.

The first time you play this game use only two shapes. Show the children the two shapes that you will be playing with. As the group has more experience with shapes, increase the number of shapes which you are using. Each time you play, review with the children the shapes which they will be trying to identify.

If you do not have a feelly box, you can make a very satisfactory one out of a shoe box. Cut holes in both long sides of the box. Each hole should be about 2" x 3". Cover the box or paint it. Be sure to leave the lid loose so that you can easily put objects into the box.



RUN TO THE CIRCLE

Tape or tie large shapes to the fence, the slide, the trees, the sandbox, or other landmarks on your playground. Tell the children that you are going to play a game outside. It will be a running game, but it will also be a listening game. You will call out the name of a shape. They are to look around until they find that shape; then they will run to it. As soon as they have run to one shape, they must listen because you will be calling out another shape to which they will run. Play as long as the children are enjoying the game; then give them a few minutes of free play outdoors before you return to the classroom.

This game is a good one for the whole group because the children who already know the shapes enjoy running. Those children who have not learned all the shapes can still play successfully by running with the others. To reinforce the name of the shape, you might ask several children or the entire group to shout out the name of the shape after they gather there.

EXAMPLES: Paige, what shape is behind you on the tree?

Everybody, what is that shape beside you on the fence?

VARIATION: Play this game indoors in bad weather, but Run to the Circle becomes Tiptoe to the Circle.

REAL SHAPES

Collect small objects which have obvious shapes. These might be a small ruler, an index card, a crayon box (rectangles), a bottle cap, a watch, a button (circles), a funnel, a snow-cone container, a witch's hat (triangles), a postage stamp, a block, dice (squares). Provide large—ten-inch—felt shapes on which the objects can be sorted.

VARIATION: Use this activity with holidays by placing all the objects in a seasonal container such as a plastic jack-o'-lantern, a Christmas stocking, or a heart-shaped candy box.

EXTENSION: Have the child choose two or three objects and tell a story about them. You might write down this story for the child to take home.

JUNK OUTLINES

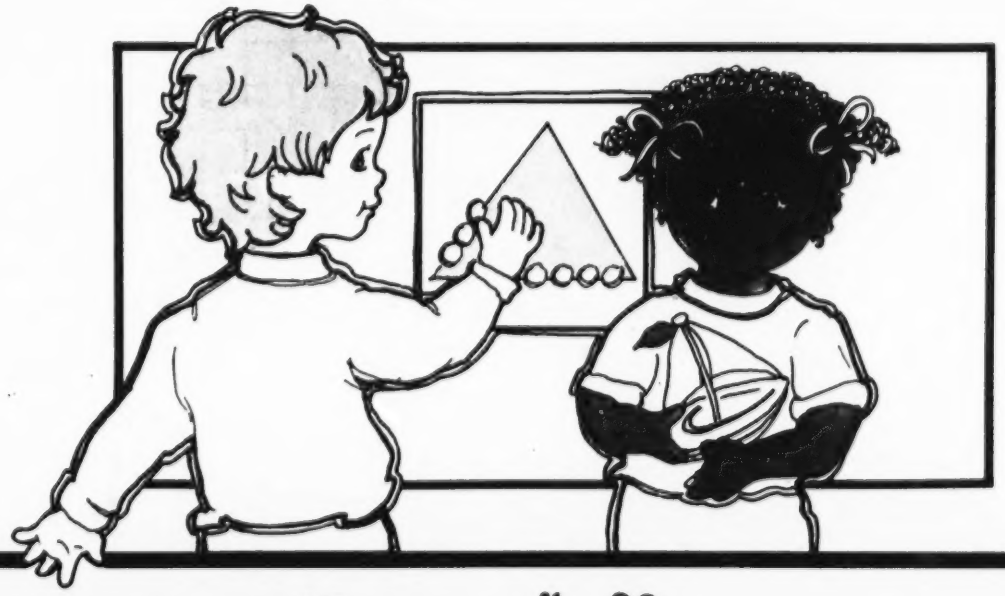
First of all, collect lots of junk, such as beans, bottle caps, wooden cubes, paper clips, plastic bread clasps, buttons, or old thimbles. Recruit the parents to help you with the junk collecting. You might also use teddy bear counters, small plastic chips, or other kinds of tokens that you have purchased.

Give each child a piece of construction paper with one shape outlined in black marker. The child places the object on the outline of the shape. As the children work, talk with them about their shapes, ask them to name their shapes, and help them find examples of those shapes in the classroom. When a child completes his shape, he trades papers with a friend and works on a new shape.

SHOW AND SHAPE

Add some zest to the usual show and tell routine by having Show and Shape. Ask each child to bring an object for Show and Tell that has the same shape as a circle, a square, or a triangle. After the sharing period let the group sort the Show and Shape items. Leave the sorted objects on a table or shelf for the children to examine during the day.

VARIATION: As you are learning each shape, have Show and Circle, Show and Square, or Show and Triangle so that children bring in only objects of one shape on a particular day.

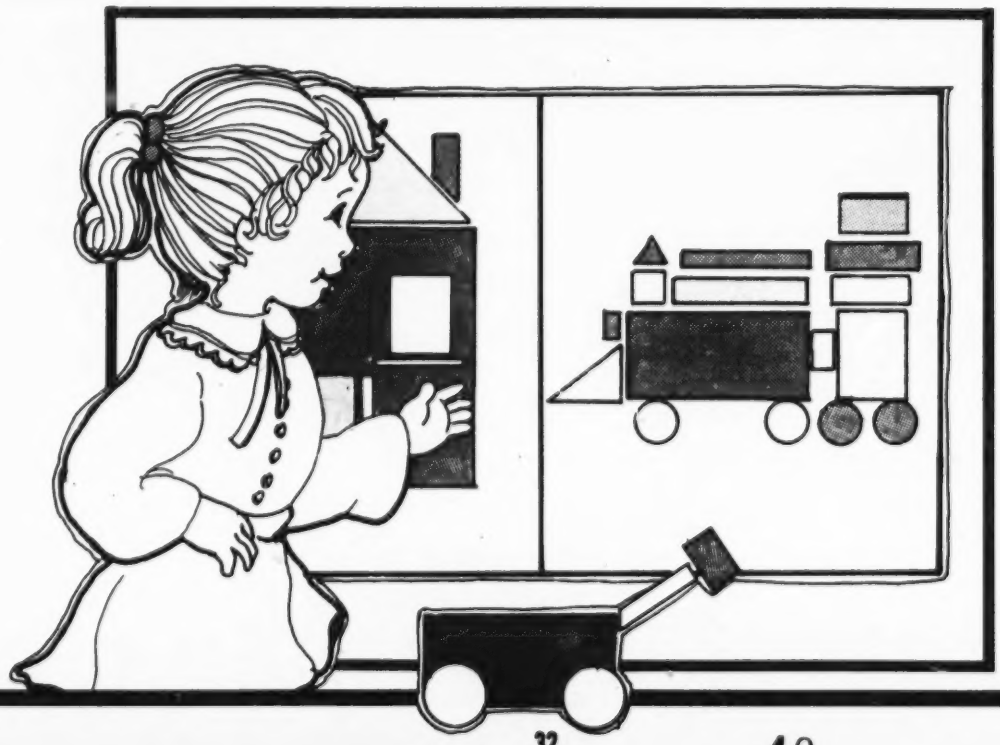


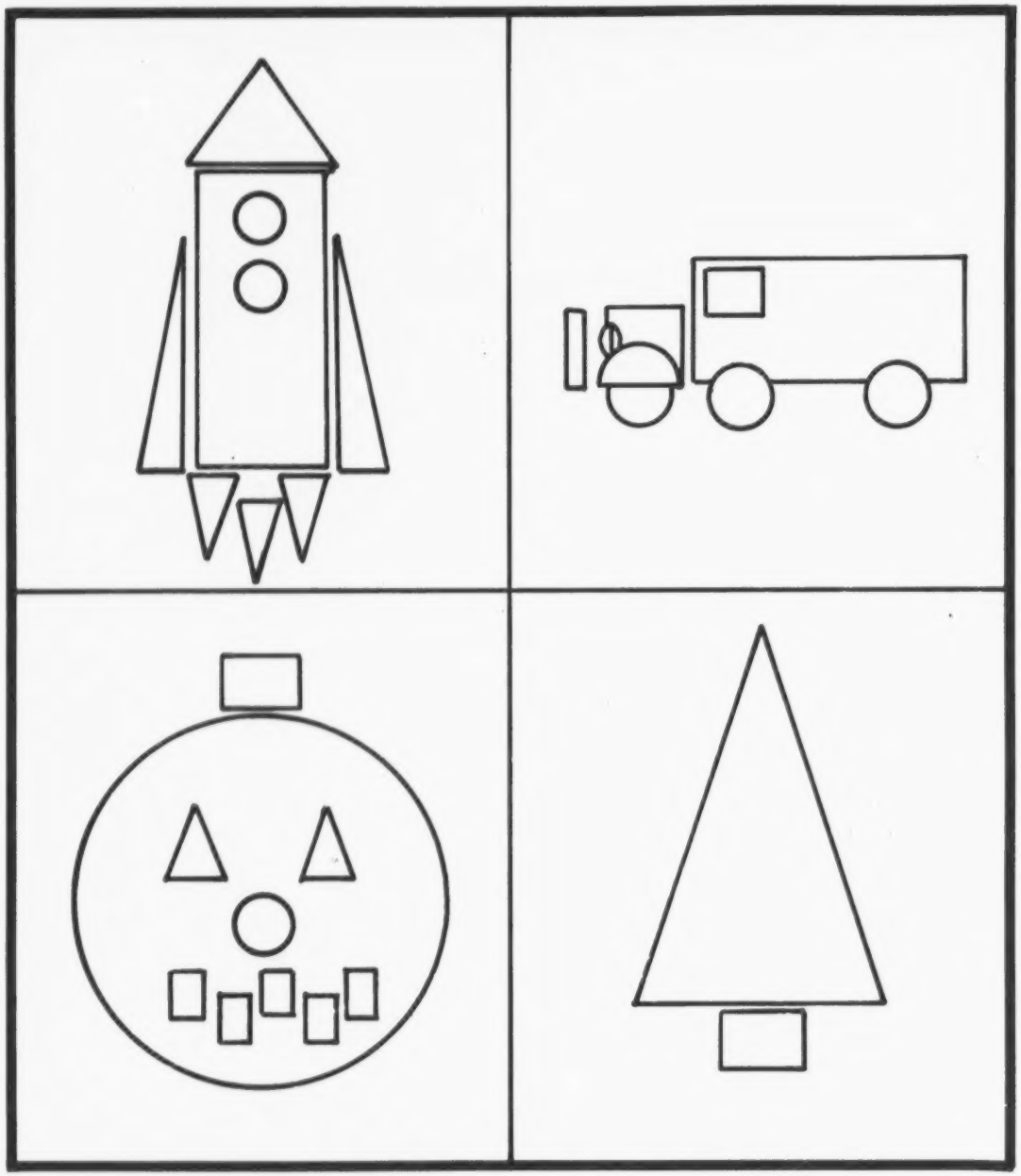
SHAPE PICTURES

Make a set of outline pictures using a permanent marker and putting each picture on an 8" x 10" piece of tagboard. Cut the shapes needed to complete each picture from colored poster board. If you glue an envelope to the back of each picture board, the children will be able to keep the pieces straight.

Give the children the pictures and shape pieces. They work these puzzles by simply matching the shapes to the outline pictures. Encourage the child to find objects in the room which are combinations of shapes—the easel is a triangle with two squares attached.

VARIATION: Give the children cardboard shapes of various sizes and colors. Let them make up their own pictures with these shapes. Some children will be able to record their shape pictures by drawing the outlines on paper, just like the shape picture puzzles which you made. Keep these drawings with the cardboard shapes so that other children can try to reproduce their friends' ideas with the shape pieces.





EXTENSION: Children who complete the shape pictures quickly may enjoy using the parquetry blocks and patterns. First put out the parquetry blocks for them to use as they wish. A few days later add four or five pattern cards. You will want to use pattern cards that create a picture and also those that are abstract designs.

SHAPE SANDWICHES

A day or two before you plan to make the shape sandwiches, ask the children to think of as many foods as they can which look like circles, squares, and triangles. This activity is good for developing the children's thinking skills.

The next day, provide some of those foods, such as square crackers, cheese cut into triangles, and sliced olives. Use foods which are low in sugar and which have some nutritional value. Instruct the children to make a shape sandwich which includes a circle, a square, and a triangle. After eating the snack, ask each child to tell a friend what foods and shapes he ate.

ART SHAPES

Let your regular art activities reinforce your shape emphasis. Here are some suggestions to get you started.

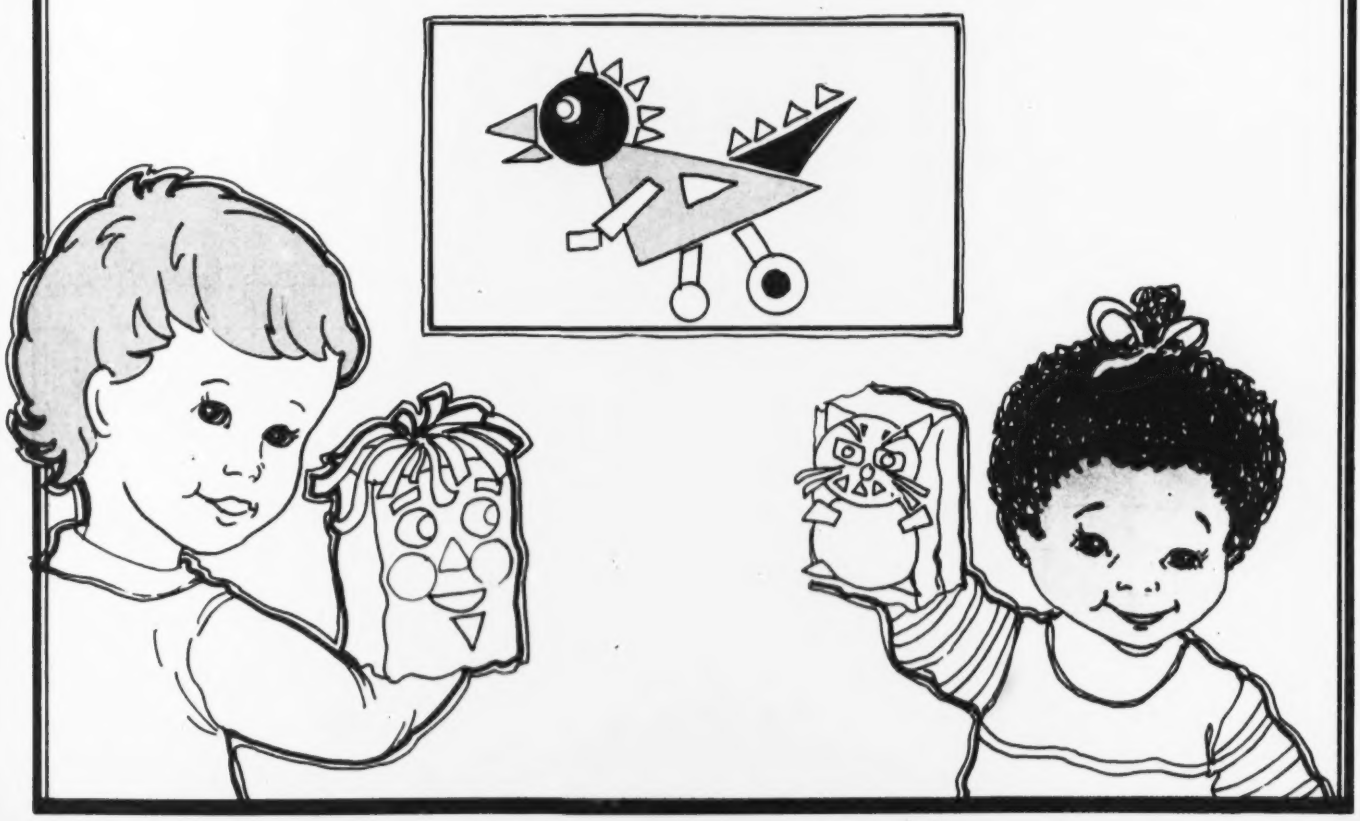
SPONGE PAINT: Use pieces of sponge cut into 1½" shapes. The sponge cuts easily if you wet it before you cut. While the sponge is wet pinch it with a clothespin for a holder. The child dips the sponge in a shallow dish of paint and prints on paper which has been cut into a large shape which matches the shape of the sponge.

CRAYON RUBS: Cut shapes from tagboard or use flat objects such as coins and playing cards. The child lays his paper over the shapes and rubs the broad side of a crayon over them.

COLLAGES: Trace or draw shapes on various colors and types of paper. Cut out the shapes and glue them on collages.

SACK PUPPETS: Let the children trace and cut (or you cut ahead of time) large circles for faces, small circles, triangles, and squares for facial features and clothing. The children glue these pieces onto their sacks to make any kind of puppet they wish. They might also use long thin rectangles or triangles and circles to create hair. If the children ask for yarn to make hair, tell them to think of another way to make hair. Then comment on the shapes that they have used for hair.

CREATURE SHAPES: Let the children cut out shapes or cut them ahead of time. Tell the children to think of imaginary creatures and use the shapes to make the animals so that everyone can see what they have imagined.



MORE SHAPES

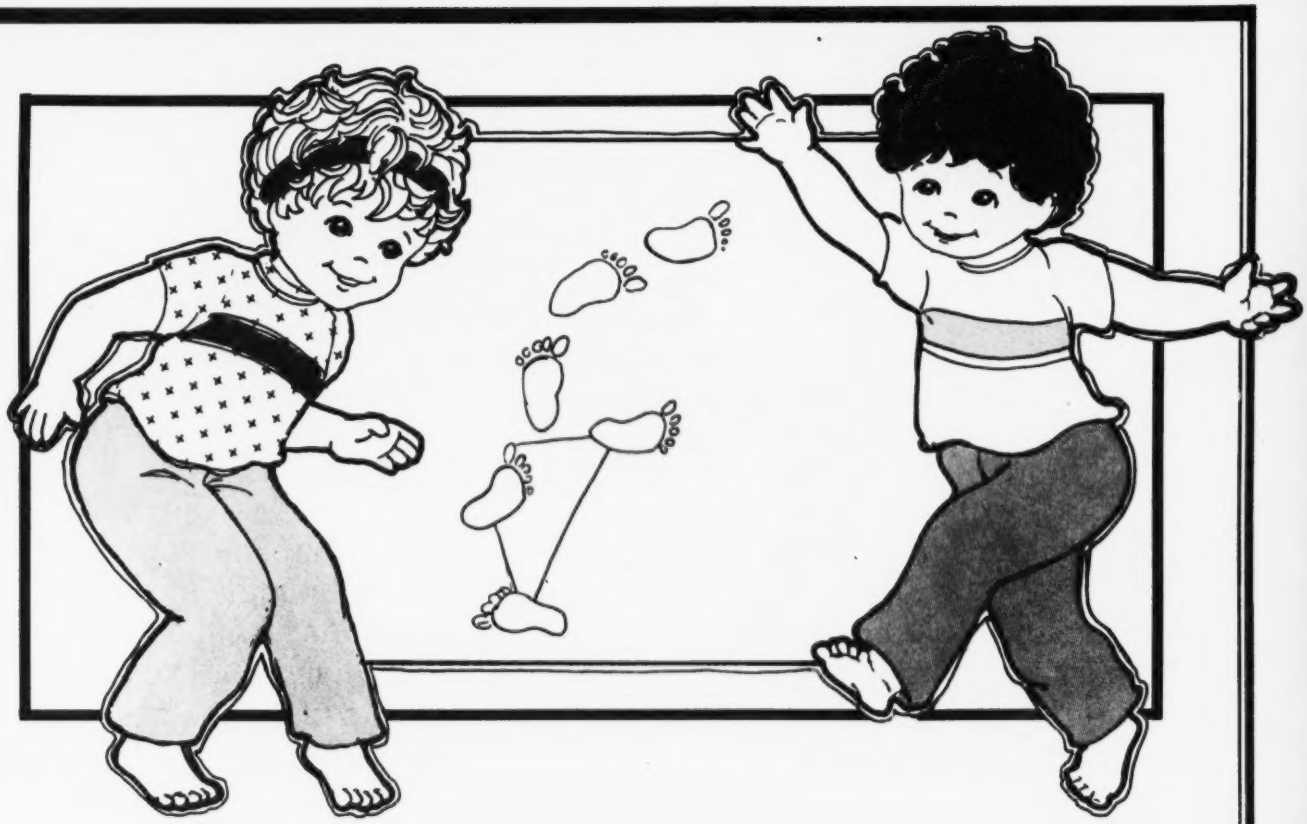
Once children have mastered the basic circle, square, triangle, and rectangle, move on to other shapes which may include oval, diamond, cross, and octagon. Most of the shape activities already presented are easily adapted for these new shapes. Do not be concerned if some children need to spend most of their time working on the basic shapes. This is entirely within the normal range of development.

As the children begin to understand the idea of shape, they will be ready for some experiences with odd shapes that may not have names. These activities will reinforce the concept of shape, although the child is not identifying predetermined shapes. Some teachers prefer to begin with this concept of shape and work into the basic shapes: "Everything has a shape. This is a special shape that has a name—circle."

CLOUD SHAPES

On a day when the sky is full of fluffy clouds, take the children outside to look at the clouds. Try to find familiar shapes of objects and animals among the clouds. Ask the children to find a shape they have never seen before and give it a name.

When you return to the classroom, have available materials for either reproducing the cloud shapes which the class has just seen or for creating new cloud shapes. This is a creative, subjective activity, so encourage children to try new techniques and shapes. Tell them that there is no way they can do it wrong. Materials to use might be cotton balls, polyester fiberfill (stuffing), blue paper, shaving cream, whipped soap powder, white paint, white yarn, popped popcorn, and chalk. Be sure to have as many different materials as possible so that the children have a choice of how to create their cloud shapes.



FOOTPRINT-TO-FOOTPRINT

Give each child a long piece of white paper, at least six feet long. Outdoors or in a hallway spread out the child's paper on the ground or floor. Let the child take off his shoes to make footprints on the paper. This can be done by painting the bottoms of the child's feet with tempera paint or by letting the child step on a thin stack of newsprint which has been saturated with paint to make a stamp pad. The child walks around all over his paper in any direction he chooses. Have a tub of water or a hose and some paper towels for the child to clean his feet.

When the footprints are dry, the child uses a black crayon or marker to make shapes on the paper. This is done by connecting the footprints, dot-to-dot fashion.

EXTENSION: Let the children cut out their footprint-to-footprint shapes and hang them up in the room.

SOMETHING OLD

After each child has completed two or three string paintings, make a gallery of string paintings by displaying all of the paintings in one place. If the whole group participates, there will be quite a few paintings. Ask the children questions which will focus their attention on the shapes in the pictures. If all of the paintings have been done with the same color of paint, the shape differences will be more evident.

EXAMPLES: Can you find two paintings that have the same shape? Can you find two paintings that are almost the same shape? What are the parts that make them different? Can you find any paintings that have familiar shapes in them?

WEEPING WATERCOLORS

This activity calls for watercolors. Be sure that you do use these paints rather than tempera. Give the child a piece of white drawing paper (not newsprint). With a small sponge the child wets the paper. Then have the child use the paintbrush to drop paint onto the wet paper. Watch the colors spread on the wet paper. If the paper begins to dry out before the child is finished, use the sponge to wet the unfinished part of the paper.

When the pictures are dry, the children use black crayons or markers to outline the watercolor shapes. These pictures are pretty and therefore are great decorations for open house or other times when parents will be visiting. By varying the colors used, the children can make fall pictures, winter or spring pictures. Or how about Fourth of July fireworks?

CHART SHAPES

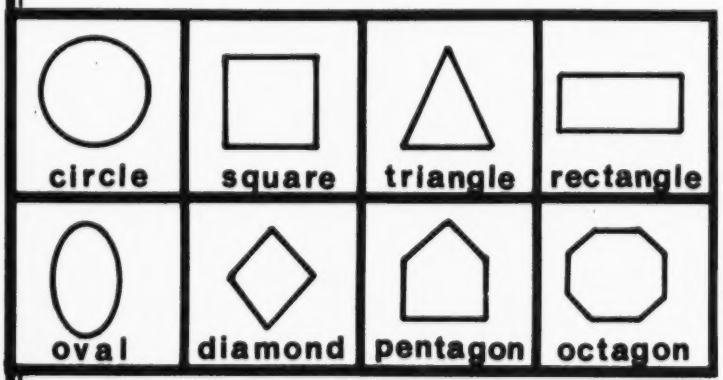
Make a large poster or chart of shapes with each shape labeled. The shapes included might be circle, square, triangle, rectangle, oval, cross, diamond, pentagon, hexagon, and octagon. Leave the chart in the room where the children can examine it for several days. Children who already know the names of the basic shapes will be interested in identifying and drawing more difficult shapes. It will not be necessary for you to draw attention to the new chart—one of the children is bound to do that for you! Nor is it necessary for you to "teach a lesson" with the chart. The purpose of this chart is to let children see various shapes and to allow children to move ahead at their own pace. After the first experiences with the chart, make it a regular part of your classroom environment.

SHAPE LOTTO

Make (or let some of the children make) a set of lotto boards with shape names in each space. Prepare cards for each board which have the matching shapes drawn on them. The child covers his lotto board with the correct shape cards. One child may play alone or a small group may play this game together with one child as the caller.

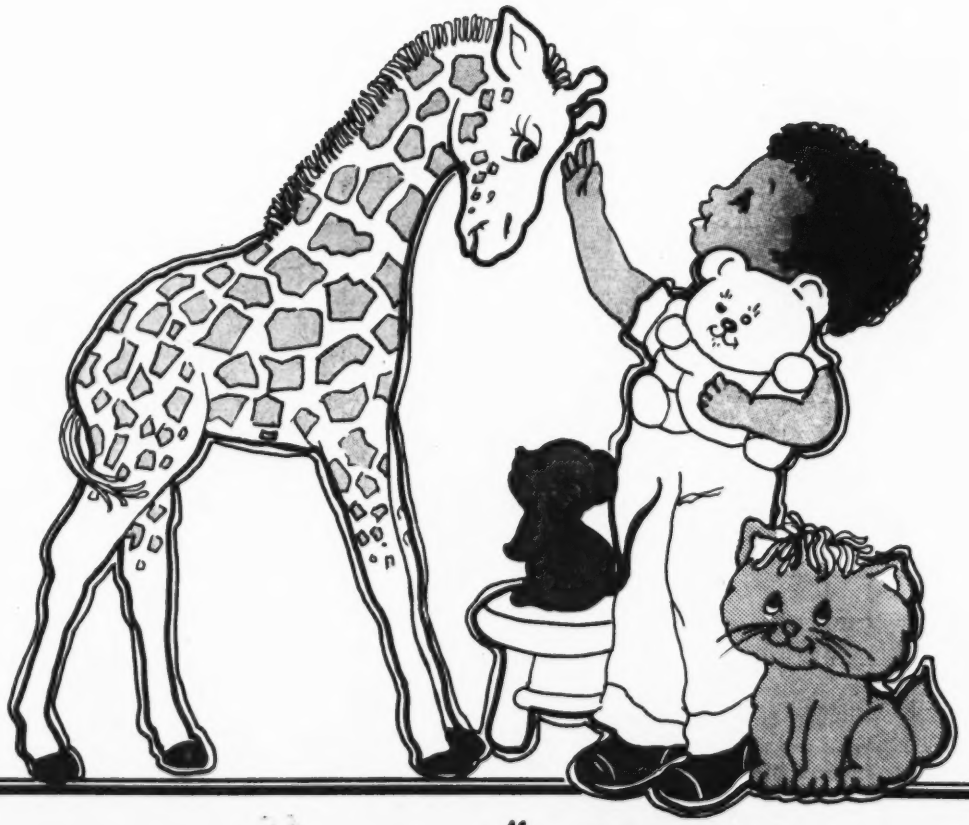
THROWING SHAPES

Make (or let children and parents make) beanbags of the shapes which you are studying. Tape cards with the shape name written on them to the floor. The children toss the correct beanbag to the matching card on the floor; or one child calls out the name of a shape and the player tosses his beanbag (you can use regular beanbags for this one) onto the correct card.



pentagon	square
cross	hexagon
triangle	oval
circle	diamond

SIZE



Size Awareness

Teaching the concept of size to preschool children is more difficult than teaching colors and shapes. Red is always red; a square is always a square. You can have Red Week or Shape of the Day. Because size has meaning only in relation to other objects, you must teach small and large together. Middle-sized or medium naturally follows very quickly.

Other size concepts in addition to big and little are short/long, narrow/wide, light/heavy, and short/tall. The activities in this section will deal primarily with the beginning size vocabulary of small/little and large/big. Many of the activities can be adapted for other size words.

Most young children are acutely aware of size. They know if a brother or sister gets the biggest cookie or that last year's jacket is now too little. Some children have already caught on to the fact that in our culture bigger is usually better. As you teach about size concepts, try to give the message that small may be just as good, that size is not the only factor to be considered in evaluating the worth of an object. Also, keep in mind that the children may use size words without fully understanding the meaning of the comparisons.

EXAMPLES: Mother says I can't wear my old coat because it's *too little*.

I ate a *big* cookie and you had a *little* one. (Both cookies were the same size.)

The children have heard family members using size words, so they begin to try them out in their own conversations.

The best way to help children become aware of sizes is to use the words frequently as you talk with them. Watch for opportunities to compare the size of things in the classroom, at lunch, and on the playground. Be careful, however, about comparing the sizes of children. Some children are very sensitive about being the tallest or shortest in the class.

Here are some more things to do to begin exploring sizes in your classroom. Remember to allow the children plenty of free time to explore the materials but to comment on their work so that they hear the words which describe the various sizes.

EXAMPLES: Miyake, you have put the *big* cup on the bottom and the *little* cup on the top.

That *small* funnel just fits into the top of that *little* bottle.

That cup is full of *large* buttons.

1. Take walks in the school or center and in the neighborhood. Tell the children to watch for small or large things. A few days later repeat the same walk, this time looking for the opposite size. If possible, take only a small group of children at a time on this walk so that you will be able to talk together effectively.

2. Put out the nesting/stacking cups in a learning center. Observe the children to see how the cups are used.

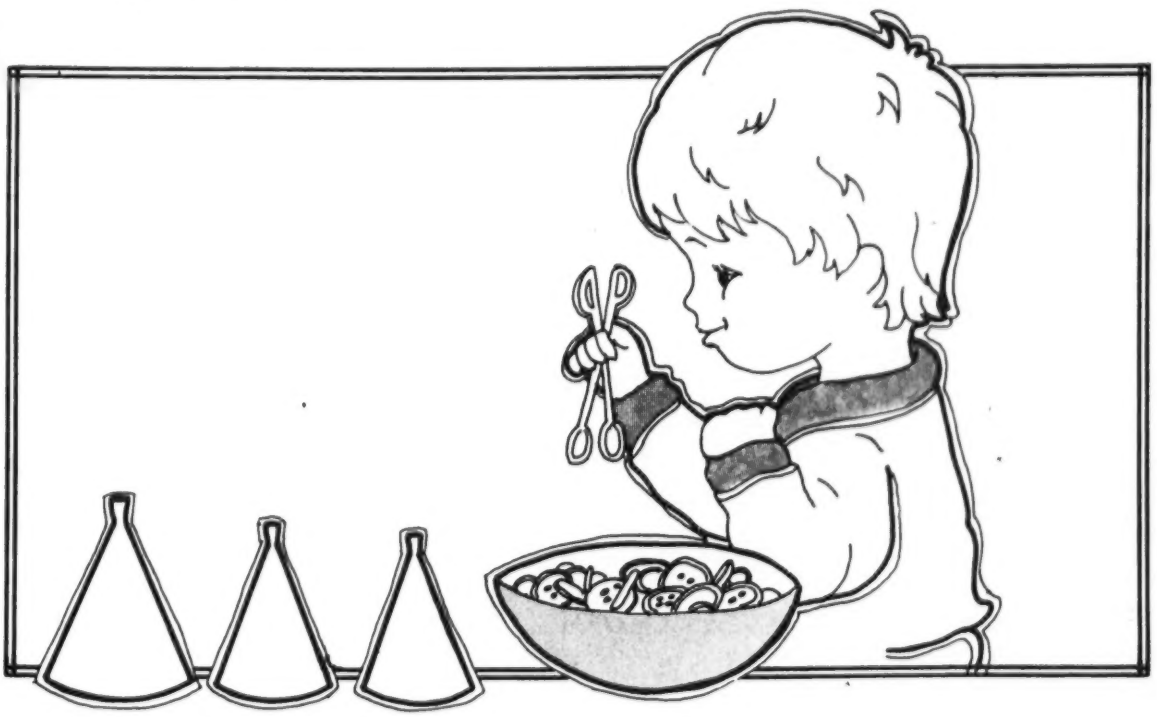
3. Place some of the attribute blocks in a basket for the children to play with. Notice whether or not the children sort the blocks by size. (See page 25 for more about attribute blocks.)

4. Put a set of three funnels of different sizes in the water table or tub. Also put in three bottles of different sizes.

5. Pour a lot of old buttons into a bowl. Include some tongs or tweezers for the children to pick up the buttons. Add a muffin pan to complete the size-sorting game. Observe the children to see if they begin to sort by sizes.

6. Put out a set of stacking rings in a learning center.

7. Place three bowls or baskets of vehicles in the block center. Each container should hold three or four vehicles. At cleanup time see if the children sort the vehicles by putting the smallest cars in one basket, the middle-sized cars in another, and the largest in another.



Size Activities

SIZES ON THE SHELF

Collect empty bottles, cans, and boxes which come in at least three sizes. You might have small, medium, and large shampoo bottles, detergent boxes, or syrup bottles. It is important that the three containers in each set look exactly alike except for their sizes. Mix all of the containers together. Let each child find a set of three bottles or boxes. He arranges the containers from smallest to largest in front of him. Help each child identify his product.

INSTRUCTIONS: Tell the children that they will be storekeepers. You are going to buy things from them. Say, "I need a large bottle of shampoo." The child who has the shampoo hands you the large bottle. Continue to buy things in this way until all the "shops" are sold out.

EXTENSIONS: Place the collection of containers in a learning center for the children to use on their own.

Place some of the containers in the dramatic play center to accompany the activities with "The Three Bears" (page 53).

CENTER SIZES

This activity is great for the beginning of the year or at any time when you have new children in the group. The procedure for this game will help to familiarize the children with the learning centers in your classroom and will give you another opportunity to reinforce putting away the materials.

INSTRUCTIONS: We are going to play a game with many of the things that are in our room. Each of you will get a turn to play. I am going to begin with Alex and go right around the circle, so you will be able to know when it will be your turn.

When I call your name, I will tell you to find a certain thing in the room and bring it to me. When you bring it to the circle, tell us the name of the thing that you have (or they can tell the name of the center where they found it).

EXAMPLES:

Alex, please bring me a *small* block.
Bonnie, can you find a *large* shoe?
Roger, please look for a *small* puzzle.
Darla, bring a *large* paintbrush to the circle.

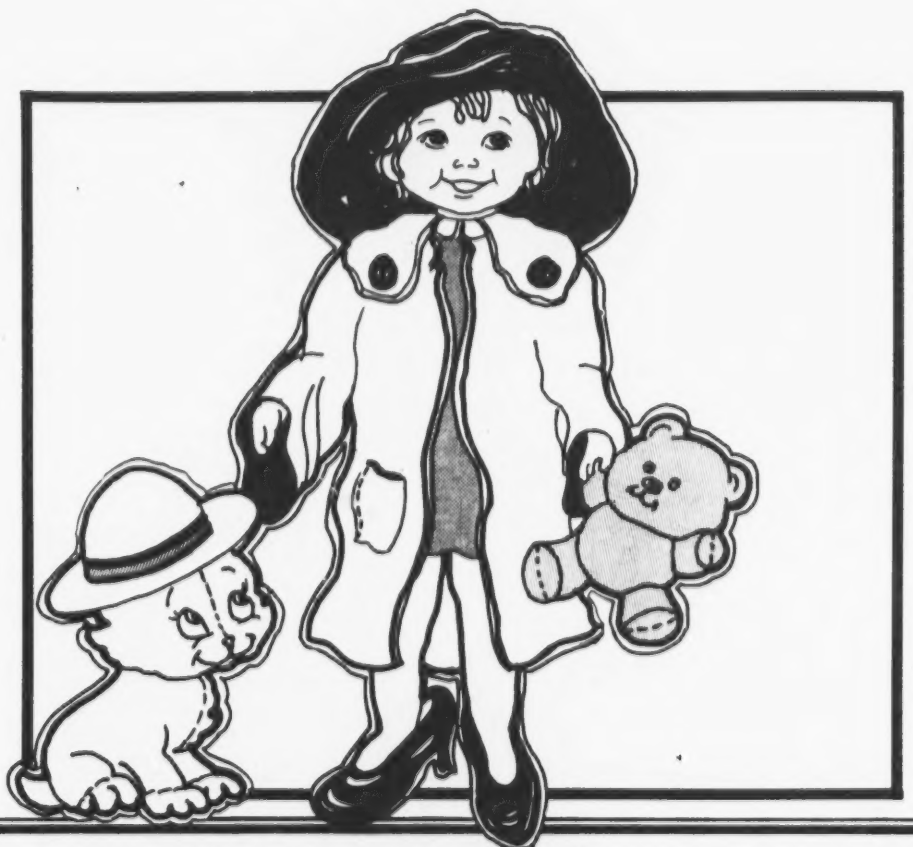
If the group is large, you might have three or four children searching for objects simultaneously so that the children do not have to wait so long for a turn.

EXTENSION: Now that you have everything collected, let the children return the items to the centers in the same way that they were gathered. Call one child to return the large pencil to the art center.

WHAT SIZE DO YOU WEAR?

Gather old clothes, shoes, hats, gloves. Ask your parents, friends, and neighbors to donate interesting items. Select from this collection of old clothing various sized pieces such as pairs of small, medium, and large shoes, or small, medium, and large shirts. Have several children help you sort the clothing by types—shirts, pants, dresses, shoes, hats, sweaters, and so on.

INSTRUCTIONS: Set out three pictures that show small, medium, and large objects or use the actual objects. Tell the children that they are going to play dress-up, but it will be a special kind of dress-up. You will point to one of the pictures (or objects) and that will be the size of clothing that the child is to wear. If you point to the small picture, the child is to say that he wears a small. For that turn the child then selects any small item of clothing to put on. If you point to the large picture, the child says, "Large" and selects a large item of clothing.



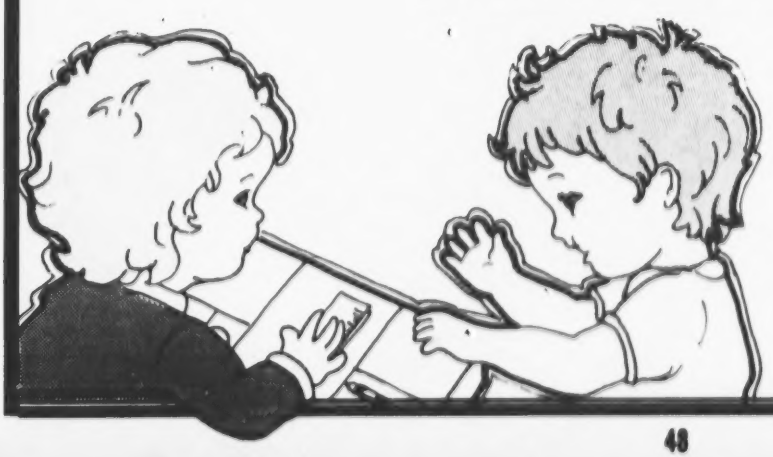
TAKE-HOME-SIZED GAME

Make a gameboard for each child that includes two large spaces, two middle-sized spaces, and two small spaces. Older children may make their own boards. The arrangement of spaces on the board does not matter.

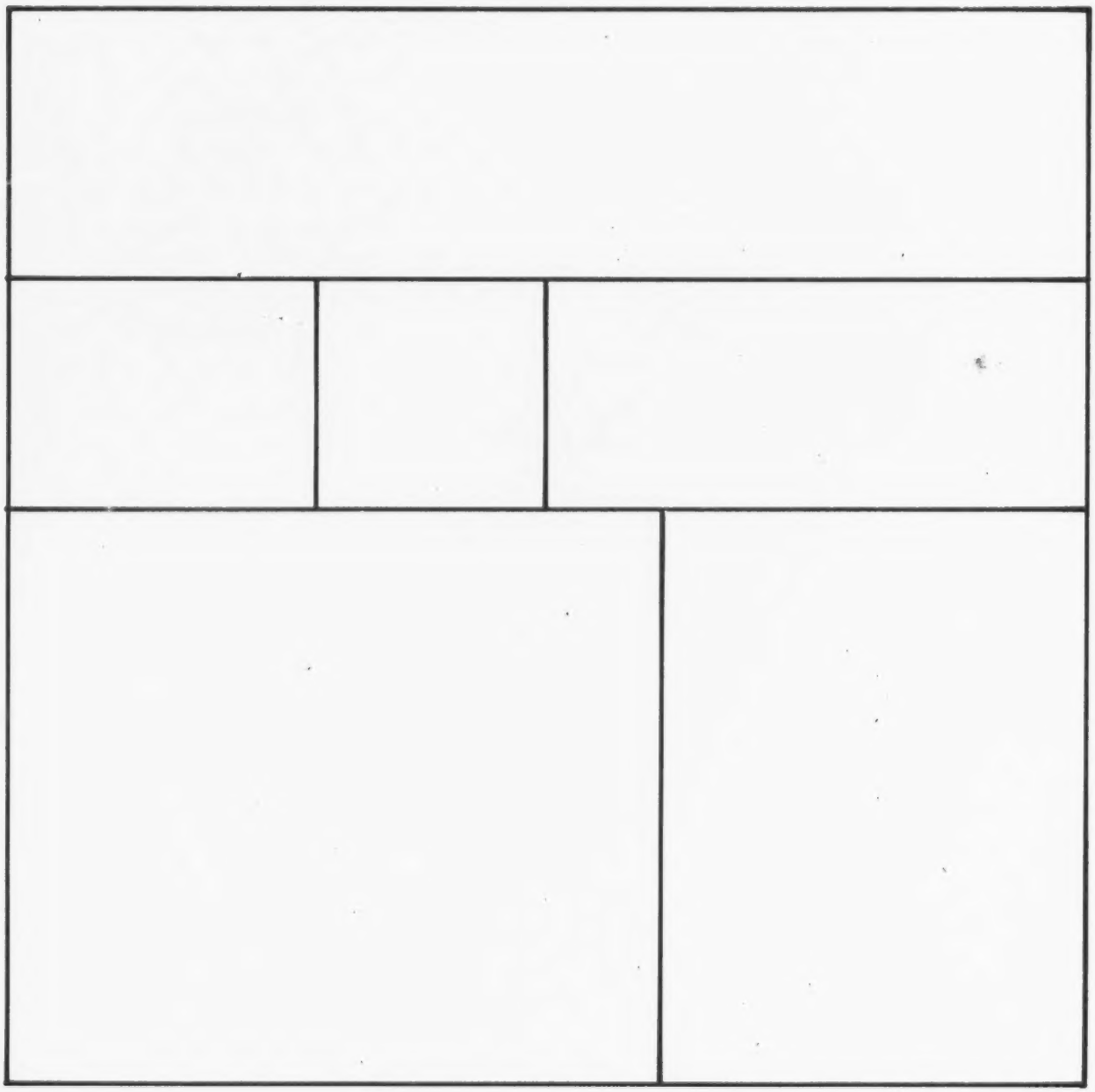
INSTRUCTIONS: Tell the children that tomorrow they are to bring back their gameboards and also two large, two middle-sized, and two small objects that will fit their boards. Tonight they can play the game at home after they find their small, middle-sized, and large objects. They place a small object on a small space, a middle-sized object on a middle-sized space, and so on. Demonstrate the game for the children using your own gameboard and objects which you have collected.

The next day each child plays his game and shows the other children what his completed gameboard looks like. In a small group of six children, you may let the children trade boards and objects and try to play their friends' games.

It is helpful to send home the gameboard in a sack so that the family will have something in which to return the board and objects. In most classes there will be some children who forget to bring their games and perhaps a few who will not return them at all. Plan to have extra gameboards in the room for those children and let them find objects in the room for their games.



VARIATION: Have all the children fill their gameboards with objects they find in the classroom or outside. This method should not be your first choice, however, because you miss the vital involvement of the families. Try sending the game home—you will probably be surprised at the number who do respond.



JUNK SIZES

Select one of your junk collections which the children can sort by size. Spools, jar lids, and odd puzzle pieces work well for this activity. Dump the junk in the middle of the table. Select one of the spools, for example, and ask the children to tell you if it is large or small. Say, "This is small. We'll put the small ones in front of me." Select a large spool. After the children identify it, say, "This is large. We'll put the large spools in front of Blaine." Then tell the group that they are going to help you divide the junk into two sets, small and large. Watch as the children sort the spools.

Repeat this activity on different days with other junk collections. Put the junk collections in a learning center for the children to explore on their own.

SIZE HUNT

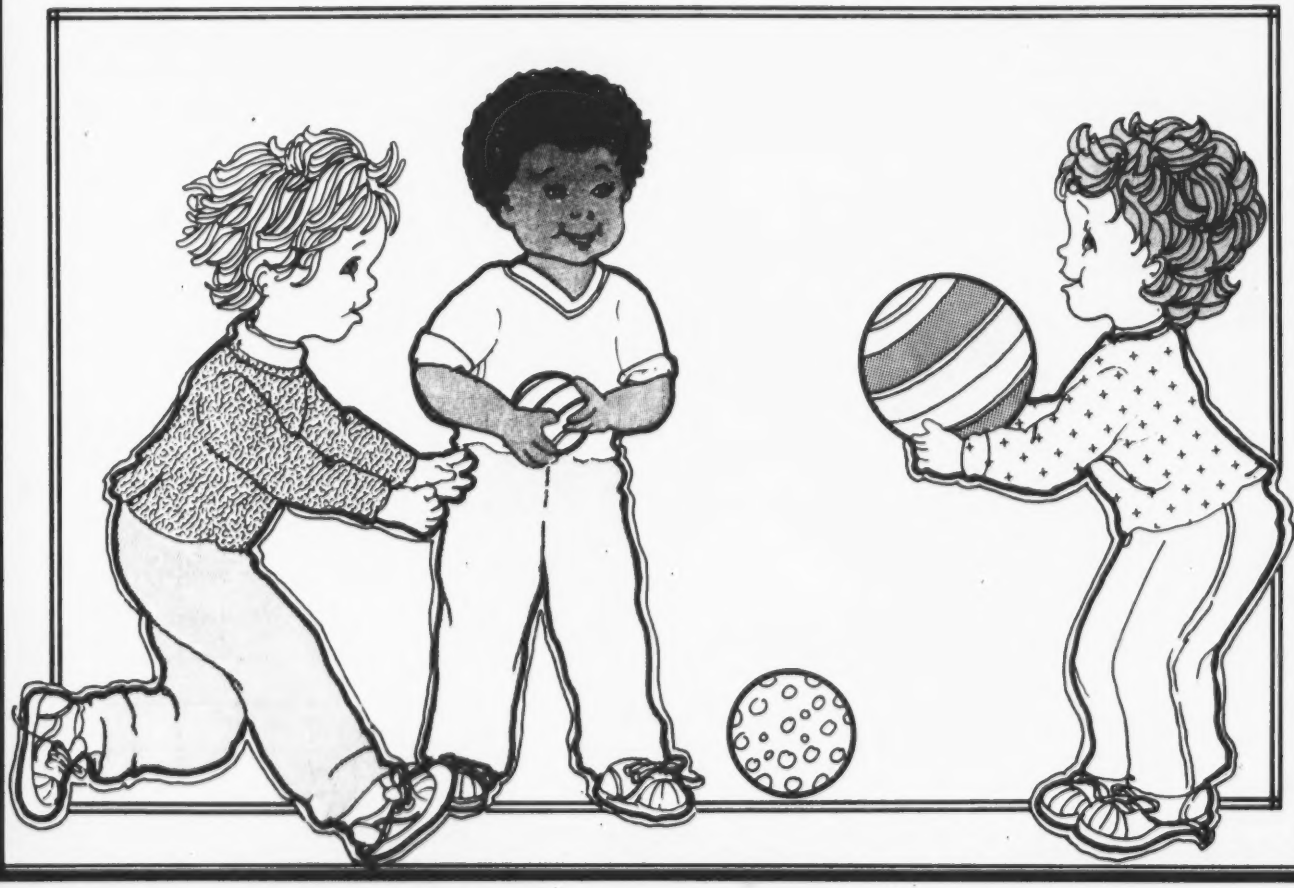
Before the children arrive, place at least one set of small, medium, and large things in each learning center. When the children are ready to begin working, tell them that in each center today they will find something large, something small, and something middle-sized. They are not to tell anyone when they find one of these objects, but when they return to the circle after cleanup time, you will let them tell the group what they found.

If the children miss some of the things which you put out, ask one or two children to go to that center and look for something. Give clues as needed. What is more likely to happen is that the children will find many more different-sized objects than just those which you planted.

OUTDOOR SIZES

While the children are playing outdoors, give them balls of different sizes. Some children will want to play on their own, but some will probably be interested in playing a game with you. Put three balls in the middle of the group. Call on a child to pick up a certain ball and toss it to another child: "Charley, toss the little ball to Bonnie." The child who catches the ball puts it back in the center and is directed to throw a ball. "Bonnie, you toss the large ball to Jay." Sprinkle your conversation and directions with size words as you play the game.

Place three buckets of different sizes (a trash can might be the large one) together in a row. The children toss beanbags at these targets. You may direct the children to toss the beanbags to a particular bucket, or you might prefer to observe the children and comment on their game. "Jill, you almost got it in the small bucket!"

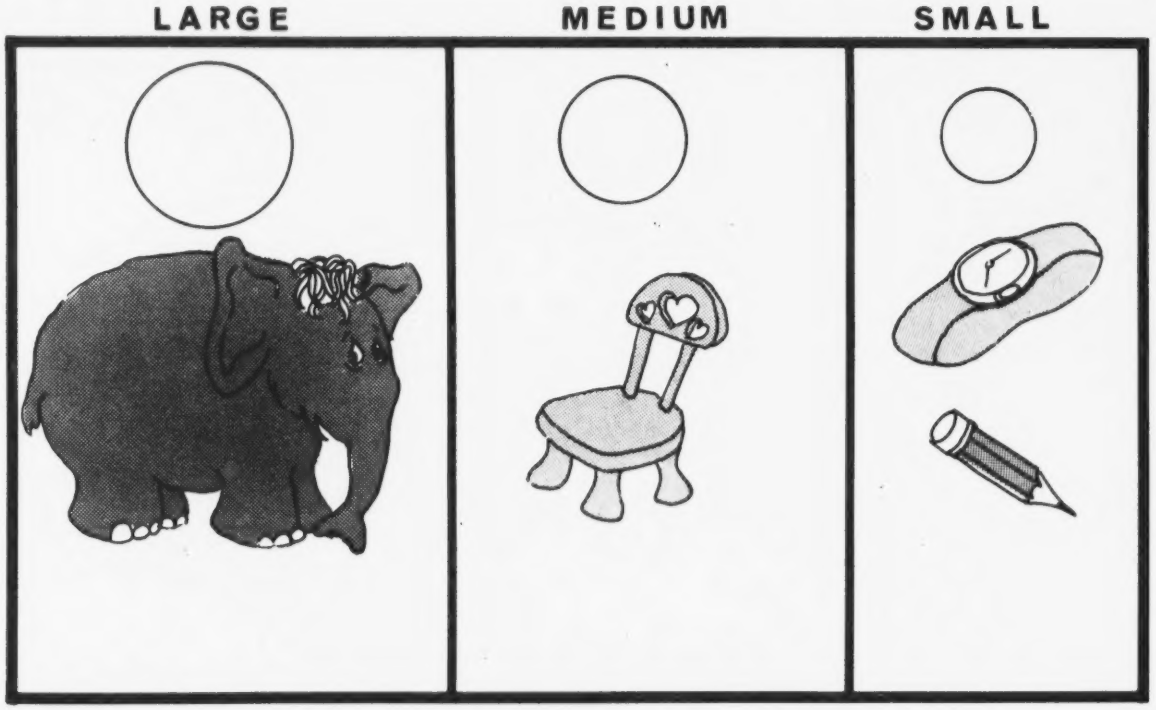


SIZE AND GLUE

Give each child a 12" x 18" paper that has been divided into three columns. Label the columns small, medium, and large. Provide magazines which the children may cut up. Tell the children to cut out pictures of small, medium, and large things and to glue them in the correct places on their papers.

You might begin this activity with younger children using only small and large. Many children will need a clue to help them know which column is for small things and which is for large things. Either draw (or have the children draw) a simple picture, such as a ball, in each column to indicate the size or make the small column the smallest space on the paper and the column for large things the largest space on the paper.

You will notice that some children glue a large picture of a key in the large column and a small picture of a house in the small column. Accept this classification for the time being, but make a note to spend some time talking about "real size" in another lesson.

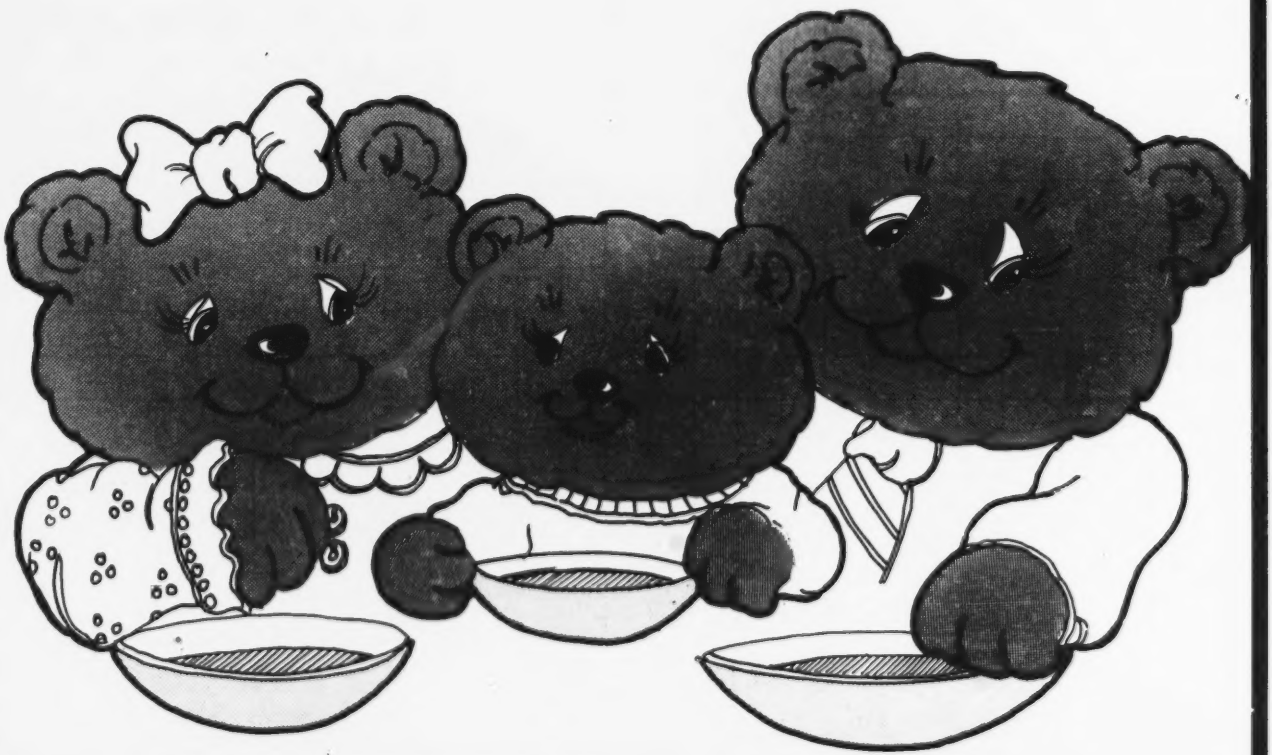


THE THREE BEARS

This is the perfect story for your study of sizes. The children already know and love the story. In addition, it offers many spin-off activities. Read the story to the group. Read it again later in the day or on the following day, but let the children help you tell the story.

Next, bring in three bowls of similar shape and color which are of different sizes. Place the three bowls in the middle of the circle and ask the children to whom these bowls might belong. Someone is sure to recall the three bears. Then ask which would be Papa Bear's bowl, which Mama Bear's, and which Baby Bear's. Pass each bowl around the circle so that each child holds each bowl. Liberally use the words *big, middle-sized,* and *little* during this activity. (Plastic mixing bowls are good for this activity.)

Follow up the discussion of the bowls by asking a child to find something in the classroom that might belong to the great big Papa Bear. Any large object is a correct answer. Continue with Mama Bear and Baby Bear for middle-sized and small objects.



In the dramatic play area of your room, include three different-sized bowls, three different-sized chairs, three place mats of different sizes. As the children play, comment on the materials that they are using. "You are sitting in the little chair, Michael."

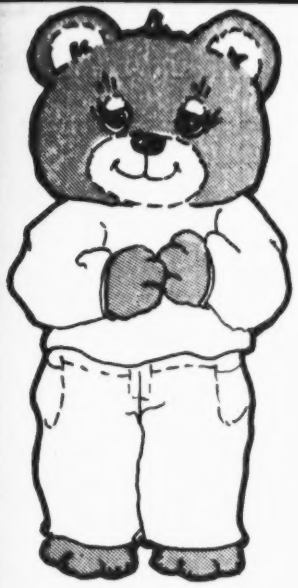
Reproduce the following page for each child who is to do this activity. You will also need scissors, glue, and a supply of 3" x 3" pieces of construction paper of various colors.

INSTRUCTIONS: Tell the children to point to the big bear, the small bear, and the middle-sized bear. Tell them that these bears are, of course, the three bears from the story. They have misplaced their bowls, chairs, and beds. Each child is to cut from the small pieces of construction paper the needed bowls, chairs, and beds. Most of the children will be able to draw and cut out their own pictures. If you are in doubt, let them try it and then help if you are needed to draw and cut pictures.

To keep the children from being overwhelmed by their task, you might tell them to first cut out Papa Bear's bowl, chair, and bed. When they have completed that, have them start on Mama Bear's things. In this way you are giving the children a system for organizing their thinking and their work.

When all of the objects are cut out, have the children place them in the correct columns. Then they are ready to glue the pictures in place.

VARIATION: Do not glue the pictures down. Instead, use the pictures as pieces in a lotto sorting game. Paper clip the small pictures to the bear paper for the child to take home.



GOING AHEAD WITH SIZE

When children can easily identify and sort small, medium, and large objects and pictures, it is time to move on to more difficult activities. One way to do this is to repeat some of the preceding activities using more than three sizes. Putting objects in sequence by size is another way of expanding the child's thinking about size. Here are some more ideas for developing the concept of size.

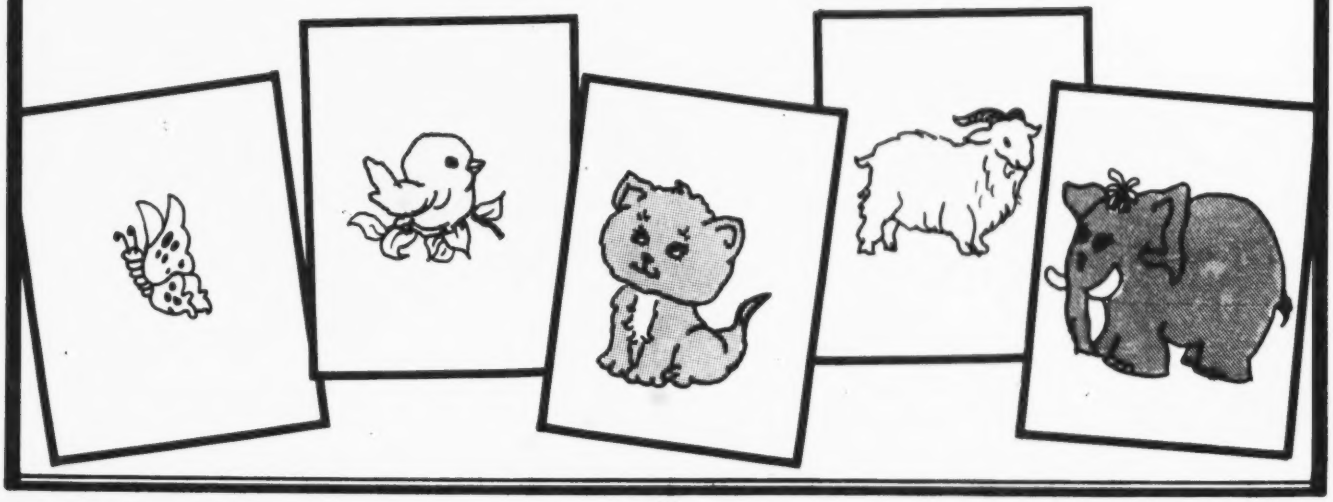
SIZE SEQUENCE

Provide the children with collections of objects which vary only in size, such as leaves, pencils, or cups. You may use as many as seven things in each set. The children arrange their collections in sequence from largest to smallest. Add to the child's involvement by giving him a paper bag to take home with instructions to bring it back containing seven objects of different sizes. Let the children trade bags and try to sequence their friends' objects.

VARIATION: When the children have mastered concrete objects, use shapes and figures, and then pictures.

BIG AND LITTLE ANIMALS

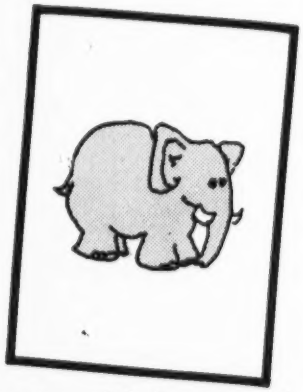
Draw or cut and glue ten animals on cards. The animals should be graduated in size so that card number one has the smallest animal and number ten has the largest animal. These animals might be a butterfly, a bird, a rabbit, a dog, a pig, a goat, a cow, a rhinoceros, an elephant, and a whale. The child puts the pictures in order from largest to smallest.



Provide word cards rather than picture cards. The child reads the word, then puts the card in line according to the size of the animal named on the card.

Put felt or a magnetic strip on the back of each card. Let the child "stack" the pictures in order on a flannel board or on a metal surface.

REAL SIZE

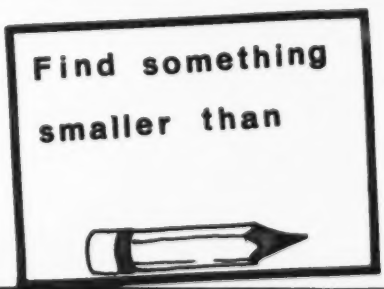


Show the children pictures of pairs of objects which are not drawn to scale, such as a small picture of an elephant and a large picture of a flower. Ask the child to identify which is smaller. Begin with pictures of objects which are in the classroom—tables, pencils, books, chairs, people, flag, and so on. As you compare these classroom pictures, check the answers by looking at the real objects.

VARIATION: Use these "out of proportion" cards to play sequence games, sequencing the real size of the objects.

FIND IT

Prepare a set of cards which give children directions for a find-it game in the classroom. The cards might say, "Find something larger than your desk," or "Find something smaller than your shoe." You will need about ten cards. The child numbers his paper from one to ten. When he has found all of the items required, he lists them on his paper and asks a friend to check his answers.



Interchangeable Parts

Listed below are games and activities which appear in the sections on color and shape. These activities may be easily adapted for teaching sizes.

Color Posters, page 3, #6: change to Size Posters

Color Parties, page 15: change to Size Parties

Color Boxes, page 19: change to Size Boxes

Easel Paper, page 25, #4: change to paint on different sizes of paper using different sizes of brushes.

Sand and Play-Doh, page 26, #8: change to use different-sized molds

Run to the Circle, page 29: change to Run to the Size

Show and Shape, page 31: change to Show and Size

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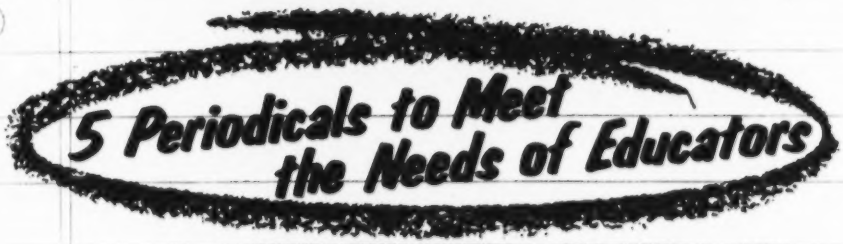

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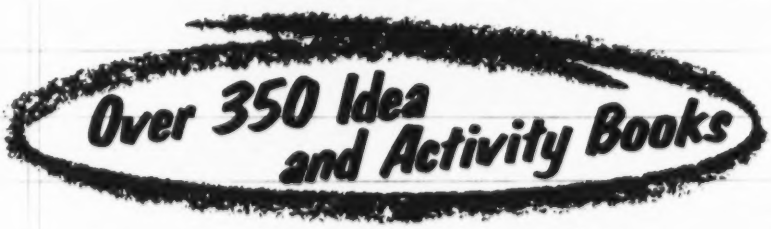

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